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OF
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Cover: *City of Pirates*, Raúl Ruiz (detail)

R A Ú L

R U I Z

P O E T I C S

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C I N E M A

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Miscellanies

Translated by

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H O L M E S

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« What is a symbol?
It is to say one thing and mean another.
Why not say it right out?
For the simple reason
that certain phenomena tend
to dissolve when we approach them
without ceremony. » (E. Wind)

« Io son ribelle; non mi
piace questo mondo che non
porta fantasia. » (A. Celentano)

PREFACE

Here is the first of the three volumes which together will compose this poetics. They will be of no great value to film buffs or professionals. I wrote them with an eye to those who use the cinema as a mirror, that is, as an instrument of speculation and reflection, or as a machine for travel through space and time.

At the origin of this volume are six lectures I gave in April 1994 at Duke University (U.S.A.), on the invitation of Fred Jameson and Alberto Moreiras. These form the first six chapters. The seventh is the introductory lecture to a seminar given in Palermo in December of the same year. As to the ideas that run through these texts, they were initially developed during the 1989-1990 school year while I was teaching at Harvard.

In this group of writings I have sought above all to deal with some of the most hotly debated themes that have engaged North and South American media theorists (Jameson, Dienst, and Moreiras); these include the narrative paradigms of the entertainment industry, the new technologies of the image, and the globalization of the audiovisual world. But there are also more European concerns, such as the nature of the image and the photographic unconscious. One will additionally find themes that recall older debates, some from the early days of film history (I'm thinking of the ideas of Bertrand Russell, Ortega y Gasset, and Elias Canetti). And from time to time, still more ancient disputes resurface here (Ramón Llull, Shih-T'ao, the theologians Molina and Bañez, etc.). To bring these together I have chosen a genre resembling what in sixteenth-century Spain were

called *Miscelaneas*, theoretical/narrative discourses where the author's prowess is to turn verbal somersaults, with sudden shifts of focus and unexpected interpolations — in short, a hodgepodge, a farrago, "everything but the kitchen sink."

The second volume, *Serio Ludens* (Serious Play) is made up of parodies and conceptual simulations. It proposes a working model for the writing of films. The third, *Methods*, is composed of exercises and formulae, and is intended as a method of filming.

These three books turn around a central conviction: in cinema, or at least in narrative cinema — and all cinema is narrative to a certain degree — it is the type of image produced that determines the narrative, not the reverse. No one will miss the implication that the system of film production, invention, and realization must be radically modified. It also means that a new kind of cinema and a new poetics of cinema are still possible.

One last remark: I am not a scholar and the majority of my references have been culled from my personal library, allowing me to check them without difficulty. But I read in zigzags, I travel from one book to the next, and this is not without risks. It is quite possible that here and there, certain interpretations or comparisons are stretched or simply gratuitous. However, this book is a journey — and travelers should be aware that paths leading nowhere are also part of the trip.

CHAPTER I

Central Conflict Theory

My purpose in this chapter is to discuss cinema, particularly American cinema. America is the only place in the world where, very early, cinema developed an all-encompassing narrative and dramatic theory known as central conflict theory. Thirty or forty years ago, this theory was used by the mainstream American industry as a guideline. Now it is the law in the most important centers of film industry in the world.

Forty years ago, in provincial theaters in Chile, we used to get lots of American films. Some of them we still remember. They are part of our childhood memories, or at least of our cultural background. Others were merely monstrous. We couldn't make head nor tail of them because they had too many heads and tails. I mean B movies. Enigmatic movies. Today, none of the mystery has evaporated. You won't have heard of most of the directors: Ford Beebe, Reginald Le Borg, Hugo Fregonese, Joseph H. Lewis, Bud Boetticher, William Baudine, and so on. Several of these directors could be held responsible for a misunderstanding which made us and many people believe that American television was the best in the world, for they were the directors of TV's first big international hits, *Twilight Zone*, *Bonanza*, *The Untouchables*. And when they disappeared, we lost all interest in American television. Who were "we"? Around 1948 or 1950, a gang of us kids were just about to leave elementary school. What we liked was using our 22 long rifles to shoot the bulbs out of street lights. We loved to fight recently

arrived German immigrants. I think our inspiration was a wave of anti-Nazi films. From time to time we would call a truce and go to the movies. There were two theaters in our village. One showed Mexican adult movies, Italian neo-realist dramas, and French *films à thèse*. The other theater specialized in American kids' movies. That was the one we went to, and even if some of us occasionally found our way to the other in the hope of seeing a naked woman, still we much preferred the films for kids. Long after we'd stopped being kids, we preferred those particular kids' movies. I think that's where I got something that could be called my first value system.

I'd like to outline some of the *concetti* I discovered in those films. Say we saw someone walking slowly, but pretending to be in hurry: we would say, "He's slower than the bad guy's horse." Someone who was in the right place at the right time: "He's like the good guy's hat." When someone cheated at cards, we said, "The dice were loaded like the last fight in a Western." Rainy Sundays were said to be more boring than a movie's last kiss. And the list goes on: as angry as Ming, as bad as Fu Manchu, a grin like the traitor's... The American movies we loved were as unlikely and extravagant as life itself. Nonetheless, there was a strange correspondence between our own ritual of going to the movies every Wednesday and Sunday, and the narrative rituals of the films themselves. Since the films were all totally unrealistic, and since they were all the same, the happy endings seemed oddly pathetic. In fact, happy endings always seemed tragic to me, because they condemned the healthy elements in a moral system to always win their battles. And naturally, like many others, I felt liberated by the sad endings of Italian movies, and I applauded the bad guys because I knew they had to lose. Of the innumerable extravaganzas American cinema gave us, I'd like to single out a scene from *Flash Gordon*, directed, I believe, by Ford Beebe, in which Flash Gordon takes an enemy space ship by force. His own men attack him. He has no radio to communicate with them. So he fires his guns and sends them a message in gunshot Morse.

Ten years later, in Santiago, I decided to study theater and cinema and began thinking about so-called dramatic construction. The first surprise was that all American films were subject to a

system of credibility. In our textbook (John Howard Lawson: *How to Write a Script*) we learned that the films we loved the most were badly made. That was the starting point of an ongoing debate between me and a certain type of American cinema, theater, and literature, which is considered well made. What I particularly dislike is the underlying ideology: central conflict theory. Then, I was eighteen. Now I'm fifty-two. My astonishment is as young now as I was then. I have never understood why every plot should need a central conflict as its backbone.

I recall the first statement of the theory: a story begins when someone wants something and someone else doesn't want them to have it. From that point on, through various digressions, all the elements of the story are arranged around this central conflict. What I immediately found unacceptable was this direct relation between will, which to me is something dark and oceanic, and the petty play of strategies and tactics around a goal which if not in itself banal, is certainly rendered so. I will try to summarize my objections to this notion of central conflict, as I learned it in North and South American universities and schools, and as it has come to be accepted throughout the world in recent years.

To say that a story can only take place if it is connected to a central conflict forces us to eliminate all stories which do not include confrontation and to leave aside all those events which require only indifference or detached curiosity, like a landscape, a distant storm, or dinner with friends — unless such scenes punctuate two fights between the bad guys and the good guys. Even more than scenes devoid of any action, central conflict theory banishes what are called mixed scenes: an ordinary meal interrupted by an incomprehensible incident with neither rhyme nor reason, and no future either, so that it all ends up as an ordinary meal once more. Worse yet, it leaves no room for serial scenes, that is, action scenes which follow in sequence without ever knitting into the same flow. For instance, two men are fighting in the street. Not far away, a child eats an ice-cream and is poisoned. Throughout it all, a man in a window sprays passers-by with bullets and nobody raises an eyebrow. In one corner, a painter paints the scene, while a pickpocket steals his wallet and a dog in the shade of a burning building devours the brain of a

comatose drunk. In the distance, multiple explosions crown a blood-red sunset. This scene is not interesting from the viewpoint of central conflict theory unless we call it *Holiday in Sarajevo* and divide the characters into two opposing camps.

Naturally, I am well aware that by inflicting a central conflict on otherwise unconnected scenes we are able to answer a number of practical concerns. This enables us to capture the attention of spectators who have lent us two empty hours of their lives. Before going any further, I would like to make two remarks relating to the legitimacy of using the time which spectators are prepared to grant us. We have been told that our job is to fill two hours of the lives of a few million people, and to make sure they are not bored. What do we mean by boredom? In about the fourth century A.D., Cassianus and some other early Christian fathers reflected on a phenomenon which they considered the Eighth Capital Sin. They called it *tristitia*, or sadness. It is induced by the noonday demon. Most of his victims are monks, isolated from the rest of the world. The phenomenon starts towards midday, when the light is at its strongest. The monk is concentrating on his meditation; he hears steps, runs to the window; there's no-one about, but there is a gentle knocking at the door of his cell; he checks there's no-one there, and suddenly he wants to be somewhere else, anywhere, miles away. This happens again and again. He cannot meditate, he feels tired, hungry, sleepy. We have no difficulty in discerning the three stages of *ennui* or boredom: a feeling of imprisonment, escape through sleep, and finally anxiety, as though we were guilty of some awful deed which we have not committed. The Abbot's cure for this is not a million miles from what today's entertainment experts say is the right thing to keep people alert at the workplace: distract distraction by means of distraction, use poison to heal. If the early fathers made these comments, I suspect it is because they did not really believe in demons. But let us make an effort, let us pretend these demons do exist. The monk is in his cell. He feels boredom coming on. He hears the footsteps. But he's skeptical. He knows there's nobody around. Still someone arrives. The monk knows that this apparition is an artifice, and he accepts it as such. The apparition offers to spring him from his cell and he says yes. He is transported to faraway lands. He'd like to stay, but it's already time to go home. Back in his cell,

he's astonished to discover that traveling has only made things worse. He's even more bored than before and now his boredom has ontological weight. We will call this dangerous new sentiment melancholy. Now every trip out of the cell, every apparition of his virtual friend, will make his melancholy more intense. He still does not believe in these apparitions, but his lack of belief is contagious. Soon the cell itself, his brother monks, and even communion with God becomes as an illusion. His world has been emptied by entertainment. Some one thousand two hundred years later, in France, Blaise Pascal, in the chapter of his *Pensées* devoted to entertainment, warns "All the evil in men comes from one thing and one thing alone: their inability to remain at rest in a room" — be it for no more than an hour. So perhaps boredom is a good thing.

What kind of boredom are we talking about? Take a classic example. A fair number of human beings who have passed the age of forty and who decline to take sedatives find themselves waking up every night around 4 AM. Most enjoy two activities: remembering things past and thinking ahead to what must be accomplished the following day. In Milanese dialect there is even a word to describe the first of these activities: *calendare*. Perhaps Bergson, who tended to doubt the importance of a present which was always seemed to vanish in the ebb and flow of past and future time, would have looked into this privileged moment when past and future part like the waters of the Red Sea before an intense feeling of being here and now, in active rest. This privileged moment, which early theologians called "Saint Gregory's paradox," occurs when the soul is both at rest and yet turns on itself like a cyclone around its eye, while events in the past and the future vanish in the distance. If I propose this modest defence of *ennui*, it is perhaps because the films I am interested in can sometimes provoke this sort of boredom. Those who have seen films by Michael Snow, Ozu, or Tarkovsky will know what I mean. The same goes for Andy Warhol, or Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet.

Let us return to films that are not boring. Films provoked by the noonday demon. Central conflict theory manufactures athletic fiction and offers to take us on a journey. Prisoner of the protagonist's will, we are subjected to the various stages making up a

conflict of which he, the protagonist, is at once guardian and captive. In the end we are released and given back to ourselves, a little sadder than before. There is only one notion in our heads, which is to go another journey as soon as we can.

I believe it was Dr. Johnson who said there were two kinds of mental illnesses: melancholy and enthusiasm. After examining the case of Christopher Smart, enthusiastic author of a new ending to the Bible, he decided that the one could cure the other. Against melancholia, he recommended enthusiasm.

You will have noticed that reference has frequently been made to the will. It is possible that central conflict theory is amalgam of classical dramatic theory and Schopenhauer. At least, that is the claim of its inventors, Ibsen and Bernard Shaw. Out of all this arise stories which feed on instances of will, in which wanting to do something (active will) and wanting someone (passionate will) are often confused. Wanting and loving are part of a single web of action and decision, confrontation and choice. How you love does not matter. What matters is how you obtain what you want. In the labyrinth of major and minor options, of daily action and passion, our kidnappers always choose the shortest path. They want all conflicts to come under the one major conflict. Central conflict theorists sometimes argue that there are no works of theater, film, or narrative without central conflict. What is true is that this theory is irrefutable, i.e., unprovable.

In daily life's subtle tissue of purposeful but inconsequential actions, unconscious decisions, and accidents, I fear that central conflict theory is not much more than what epistemology describes as "a predatory theory": a system of ideas which devours and enslaves any other ideas that might restrain its activity. Ever though we know the foundations of central conflict theory were laid by Shaw and Ibsen, and even if Aristotle is invoked as its patron, I believe that its current acceptance draws it much closer to two rather minor philosophical fictions.

One is Maine de Biran's *réalisme volitif*, or willful realism, in which the world is constructed by collisions that affect the subject of knowledge, such that the world is no more than the sum of its collisions — which is like describing one's holidays as a series of car

accidents (though I'm sure that if this system were modified along the lines of Leibniz's reforms of Descartes' dynamics, the results would be stunning). The other philosophical fiction implicit in central conflict theory reminds me of Engels' *Dialectic of Nature*, according to which the world, even a peaceful landscape or a dead leaf, is a sort of battlefield. A flower is a battlefield where thesis and antithesis fight, looking for a common synthesis. I would say that both these theories share the same thrust, which one might call "a presumption of hostility." Different kinds of hostility. The principle of constant hostility in film stories results in another difficulty: it makes us take sides. The exercise of this kind of fiction leads often to a kind of ontological vacuum. Secondary objects and events (but why call them secondary?) are ignored. All attention is focused on the combat of the protagonists.

The voracious appetite displayed by this predatory concept reaches far beyond theory. It has become a normative system. The products which comply with this norm have not only invaded the world but have also imposed their rules on most of the centers of audiovisual production across the planet. With their own theologians, inquisitors, and police force. For about the last three or four years, whether in Italy or in France, fictions which do not comply with these rules have been considered unacceptable. And yet there is no strict equivalence between stories of conflict and everyday life. Of course, people fight and compete, but competition alone cannot contain the totality of the event which involves it. I sometimes discuss the trilogy of election, decision, and confrontation that configures an act, which is then forced into a unified conflict system. I will not step too far into the labyrinth that American philosophers of action (such as Davidson, Pears, and Thomson) have opened up for us. Just a quick tour so I can communicate the astonishment which overcomes me every time I attempt to approach the problem.

First, election. Election is choice. A choice between what? A person who must make a choice is in a position where he or she has no choice but to choose. The person cannot turn around and go home or there would be no story. In addition, there are a limited number of options to choose from and they have been pre-ordained.

By whom? God? Social practice? Astrology? Is my choice predetermined? If someone — say God — has determined my choice, between how many options has he chosen? It's a tough question. I remember a problem in game theory in which universal suffrage elections had to be organized with an infinite number of voters, candidates, and political parties, in an infinite world, giving all of them winning strategies, such that they all in fact win¹ (cf. Tarski and Solar Petit, on the applications of S. Ulam's "measurable cardinal"). Let us remember that the supercomputer (which Molina calls God) knows more or less whether we are bound for heaven or hell; but since infinity is only potential and never actual, His knowledge only pertains to the actual state of things. If I am condemned to hell and yet I use my free will to change my life and thus become a good person, God will immediately know that I am saved (according to *ciencia media*, or "median knowledge").

In the opposite instance, people who act without thinking and thus skip the stage of election or choice, in effect choose *a posteriori*: A man gives the wall a kick and breaks his leg, congratulates himself and says what I've done is well done because I did it; the sovereignty of my action is reason enough. Which is exactly how Don Quixote behaves. He progresses as he goes. He follows the logic of his nonsense (*la razón de la sinrazón*).

A curious Muslim variation on the theme of choice can be expressed in the following way: in order to choose, I must first choose to choose. And in order to choose to choose I must first choose to choose to choose. When there is a choice, I can make this choice into a kind of bottomless pit. Let us suppose that God is at the bottom of it all; then in the final analysis, it is God's choice. And if the choice is bad, it is because God wills it so. So why choose? Another more practical problem is the question of how many options we need to choose from. Let's say we have two. Suppose that in our story, at the end of each episode, there is again a choice between two options, and each choice is a fresh one, independent of any global strategy. In order for us to want to keep on following our protagonist, how many mistakes can he make? In a particularly fascinating essay, the pigeon specialist C. Martinoya proposed a description of the ritual cycle of pigeon's mistakes. He invented an

experiment in which the pigeon is placed between two windows, one full of food and the other empty. Instead of altering this disposition — as an ordinary pigeonologist would have done — he kept it as was and thus was in a position to observe that though pigeons very quickly learn to find the food, occasionally, according to quantifiable cycles, they check to see if by any chance there is not some food in the empty window. Having noticed this in pigeons, Professor Martinoya tried the same experiment with a group of his colleagues from the University of Bochum. To his surprise, they behaved exactly as the pigeons did. When he asked his colleagues why they behaved in this way, they were unable to say, except for one of them who made the vaguely philosophical response, "just to make sure the world is still in place." Perhaps if we apply the pigeons' cycle of deliberate mistakes to an adventure movie, we might conceivably discover the same pattern among the protagonists. Let us be pessimistic and assume the protagonist constantly makes the wrong choices. What kind of a story will this produce? Will the ending be sad? Will it have an ending at all? Will the story be circular? In my opinion, we will have a comedy on our hands, because the spectator will already know the protagonist's choice, and this choice will make him laugh.

What about a story without any choices at all? Not even a refusal of choice (like Hamlet). Let me suggest a few examples of no-choice stories which come to mind. In the battle of Alcaçar Quivir, Dom Sebastião, King of Portugal, arranges his troops opposite the Muslim lines. He tells his soldiers not to move until he gives the order. Several hours go by. The king says nothing. He seems almost asleep, or at least absent, miles away from the battlefield. The enemy attack. In the face of defeat, one of the courtiers goes to the king and says "Lord, they are coming towards us. It is time to die." The king replies, "Let us die then, but let us die slowly." He vanishes into the thick of the battle and is never seen again. His attitude is considered a kind of heroism, a form of mystic heroism. He becomes a myth, and also a model. A few centuries later, during the Los Angeles Olympics, a great Portuguese athlete is leading the ten thousand meter race. Suddenly he quits. This gesture is interpreted as heroic by his people. He returns home to great acclaim and the President of the Republic at the time calls him "a worthy successor to Dom

Sebastião." Another example, closer to home, is Bartleby, the eponymous hero of Melville's tale. His leitmotif, "I would prefer not to," became the slogan of my generation. In this bestiary of non-decisions, we must include Buddha, or at least my favorite incarnation of him, Ji Gong, the so-called "crazy monk." Also the Spanish Justificationist heretics in their late form, which can be summed up in the proposition: "since Christ saved us, there is nothing left to do." Priscillian considered that in order to leave a room one should first bang up against the walls, because actually noticing a door or a window was in itself a reprehensible action. We can add to this list those American and Soviet political scientists who developed the abstentionist philosophy known as conflict resolution. In this theory, if I am not misled by the contradictory principles of the opposing political theories which have contaminated it, intervention comes before the conflict has already begun, so as to neutralize it. Finally, to complete this anthology, I'd like point out a strange discipline called ethnomethodology invented by Professors Garfinkel, Le Cerf, and others, and in particular one practical example. A pupil asks his teacher for advice: "I'm a Jew. Can I marry a non-Jewish girl?" The professor has a number of possible, brief, and arbitrary responses. He knows, before the conversation takes place, that he is going to say no to the first five questions, yes to the next three, and so on, regardless of what the questions are. The pupil must comment on each of the teacher's responses. His sixth question is followed by the following comment: "So whatever I do I must not introduce my non-Jewish fiancée to my parents." The teacher replies "Yes, you must," thus contradicting the response to the first question. But we can conceive a more dramatic example. The pupil asks "Should I kill my father?" "Yes, you must," the teacher would reply. Then the pupil says "But if I kill him I will never be able to bring him on holiday to Rome?" And the teacher says "Yes, you will."

Obviously, a fanatical supporter of central conflict theory will always be able to argue that every instance of refusal or hesitation is a form of action, and that any all-embracing refutation — where the proposed action is rejected as a whole — is what philosophers of action call "akratic acts." In a short essay on Freud, Donald Davidson uses the term "Plato's Principle" for the thesis

that no intentional act can be intrinsically irrational and "Medea's Principle" for the theory that a person can only go against his or her better judgement if obliged to do so by some external force which violates his or her will. Later, in an attempted summary of Freud's outlook, he touches on the central problem: 1. Our mind contains semi-independent structures which do not blindly follow the decisions of the decider (let's call it the central government). 2. These regions of the mind tend to organize themselves as independent powers, or independent minds with their own structures, connected to the central subject by a single thread. In the esoteric Chinese treatise entitled *Secret of the Golden Flower*, an anonymous author illustrates the four steps in meditation with a drawing showing a monk meditating; by sheer force of concentration he divides into five small meditating monks, after which each of the five divides in turn into four new monks. 3. These semi-independent substructures are capable of taking power over the whole and of making major decisions. Why not think of it as a Republic in which a political party of small monks wins an election and takes decisions against the interests of — and above all beyond the comprehension of — that larger monk which is the Republic of the self?

Another element of conflict theory is the question of decision. The first problem I have with this notion is in the very words. Is drama conceivable without central points of decision? Personally, I have sought to work with stories, fairly abstract ones I admit, using what might be called a pentad ludic model. Put more simply, I consider that my protagonists are like a herd of dice (just as one says "a herd of buffalo"). The number of sides to the dice varies from herd to herd — it can be zero, six, or infinite — but in each herd this number is always the same. The herds play five different games. They compete against other herds; and in this game the rules of central conflict theory are often observed. But the same herd will sometimes play a game of chance (which is quite natural for dice); and in a third variation, the dice also feign the emotions of fear, anger, and joy, donning disguises and playing at scaring each other or making each other laugh. A fourth game is called vertigo: the aim is to strike the most dangerous pose, threatening the survival of the entire herd. A fifth game might best be called the long-term wager.

For instance, they'll say something like, "I swear not to change my shirt until Jerusalem falls," or more simply, "I'll love you for the rest of my life."

Inside each die there is an indefinite number of miniature dice, with the same number of sides as the big die, except that these inner dice are very slightly loaded so that they tend to give the same results, becoming "tendentious." The herd attempts to take this trickery of the individual dice into account during each game, lending coherence to the ensemble. Luckily, within each of the small dice is a kind of magnetic powder which encourages the entire dice population to converge on the same point. So in this example, will is divided into three elements: ludic behavior, trickery, and magnetic attraction. In each game, the herds embark on a long and erratic journey, but sooner or later they meet at a single point. As this point approaches, the frequency and intensity of the games increase. Now, let's say that this galaxy of herds converging on a single magnetic pole is on the point of taking a decision. But this is also the final and/or vanishing point; let's say that a single action is the result of the collisions of these dynamic atoms (the herds of dice), and that each one possesses the galactic structure described above. End of conceptual simulation.

Let us go back to a normal or normalized story. The protagonist is getting ready to act. He is going to make a decision. He has weighed the pros and the cons, he knows, as far as possible, the effect of his decision. Unfortunately, the protagonist is a thirteenth-century Arab who would not dream of making a decision without first consulting the *Treatise on Cunning*. He knows that the first object of any decision is to allow one to submit to God's will. Decisions must be taken, as it were, by imitating God. But God created the world using *hila*, or cunning. *Hila* is not the quickest means to an end, but it is the most subtle: never direct, never obvious, because God cannot choose too obvious a path. He cannot, for instance, force his creatures to do anything. He cannot take any decision which might provoke conflict. He must use *baram*, or detour: artifice (*kayd*), mystification (*khad*), trap (*makr*). Let's imagine a Western based on these principles. The hero lays traps, never actually gets in a fight, but does all he can to submit to the will

of God. One day, he finds himself face to face with the bad guy (let's call him the sheriff) in the main street. The bad guy says, "You held the bank up and you're going to pay for it." The good guy's response is "What exactly do you mean by held up a bank? How can you be sure I held up the bank? Anyway, what is new in what you've just said? And in what way do your comments bring us closer to God?" In fact, his reaction is much the same as the English philosopher G. E. Moore's would have been.

The point of this digression is to say that the criteria according to which most of the characters in today's movies behave are drawn from one particular culture (that of the USA). In this culture, it is not only indispensable to make decisions but also to act on them, immediately (not so in China or Irak). The immediate consequence of most decisions in this culture is some kind of conflict (untrue in other cultures). Different ways of thinking deny the direct causal connection between a decision and the conflict which may result from it; they also deny that physical or verbal collision is the only possible form of conflict. Unfortunately, these other societies, which secretly maintain their traditional beliefs in these matters, have outwardly adopted Hollywood's rhetorical behavior. So another consequence of the globalization of central conflict theory — a political one — is that, paradoxically, "the American way of life" has become a lure, a mask: unreal and exotic, it is the perfect illustration of the fallacy that Whitehead dubbed "misplaced concreteness." Such synchronicity between the artistic theory and the political system of a dominant nation is rare in history; rarer still is its acceptance by most of the countries in the world. The reasons for this synchronicity have been abundantly discussed: politicians and actors have become interchangeable because they both use the same media, attempting to master the same logic of representation and practicing the same narrative logic — for which, let's remember, the golden rule is that events do not need to be real but realistic (Borges once remarked that Madame Bovary is realistic, but Hitler isn't at all). I heard a political commentator praise the Gulf War for being realistic, meaning plausible, while criticizing the war in former Yugoslavia as unrealistic, because irrational.

In *Acts and Other Events*, J. J. Thomson attempts to define the instances of action. With an irresistible sense of humor, she attacks the assassination of Robert Kennedy with a barrage of algebraic formulas. Her analysis touches on bungled actions (intended acts which never take place), including a case in which a crime is perturbed, or provoked, by a harmonica concert — if the harmonica itself is not perhaps the crime. I quote: "If you shoot a man, is your aiming of your gun before firing it a part of shooting him? I think so. (It certainly seems as if your aiming a gun at your victim plays a part in your getting him shot). Now suppose that Sirhan did pause between aiming and firing. This would mean, as we saw, that his shooting of Kennedy was a discontinuous event. For there was no part of the shooting that was occurring at any time during that pause." Breaking down an action into micro-actions implies that these micro-actions may to an extent be independent of each other. They may even contradict each other, or be incidental to the main action — as if the sudden interest an assassin might display in the victim's shirt had nothing to do with the assassination. Everyone knows Zeno's breakdown of the act of walking into infinite components. For years I have dreamed of filming events that could move from one dimension into another, and that could be broken down into images occupying different dimensions, all with the sole aim of being able to add, multiply, or divide them, and reconstitute them at will. If one accepts that each figure can be reduced to a group of points — each point being at a particular (unique) distance from the others — and that from this group of points, figures can be generated in two, three, or n dimensions, it is then equally acceptable that adding or subtracting dimensions can change the logic of an image and therefore its expressivity, without modifying the image altogether.²

I know people will bring me down to earth and say such a film is either just not possible or, at any rate, not commercial. But I'd like to point out that a film dissolve is a way of juxtaposing two three-dimensional images, which, as Russell pointed out, can even form a six-dimensional image. Any film, however ordinary, is infinitely complex. A reading that follows the storyline may make it seem simple, but the film itself is invariably more complicated. Incidentally, are we even sure that people in the near future will be

able to understand the films we're making now? I don't mean so-called difficult films, because they have been discussed and commented on at length. I mean films like *Rambo*, or *Flash Gordon*. Will people be able to recognize the hero from one shot to the next? A good viewer of the future will immediately recognize that between shot 24 and 25 Robert de Niro has had pasta for lunch, while between shot 123 and 124 he has clearly had chicken for supper; but this disruption of continuity through excessive culinary attention will make it impossible for him to follow the plot. A few weeks ago, Professor Guy Scarpetta informed me that his students at the university de Reims are unable to understand a film by Alfred Hitchcock, perhaps because the things which we take for granted and which help us to understand a film are undergoing rapid change, along with our critical values.

One last observation concerning points of decision. Can a decision contain other, smaller decisions? Obviously, it can conceal other decisions, it can be hypocritical or irresponsible, but can it be sub-divided into smaller units? Even if I do not believe in the consistency of the problem, I cannot help thinking that when I make a decision — for instance the decision to come here among you — the choice is there to hide a series of other decisions which have nothing to do with it. My decision is a mask, behind which there is disorder, *apeiron*. To be honest, I had decided not to come here. Yet here I am.

CHAPTER II

Images of Nowhere

In a novel by Kasimierz Brandys, the hero returns to Warsaw, old Warsaw, reconstructed after the Second World War as a carbon copy of itself, neighborhood by neighborhood, street by street, house by house. He seeks out his former home, burnt down in the air raids. The streets seem at once familiar and strange. He recognizes a street, a few trees, even a café, then confidently rounds a corner expecting to find his old home. Instead he comes face to face with a blank wall, for here the planners have omitted a couple of streets, among them the one he is looking for. The reconstruction of Warsaw was a great success in everyone's eyes. Only a few, in truth a very few, were disappointed. It is possible that only a single person was struck with this disappointment: the last survivor of a street the planners forgot.

Every time I read or re-read some dream-like or nightmarish description of utopia, I have a feeling that, like the reconstruction of Warsaw for Brandys' character, it is relevant to everyone but me. Happy versions (like Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*) just don't rejoice me, and frightening ones (like the biblical *Apocalypse*) don't seem worthy of my panic. This is probably because — to use a utopian turn of phrase — they don't seem to exclude anybody at all in general, though in fact they exclude everyone in particular.

A more recent tradition claims that the death of socialism has made utopia redundant. On the contrary, I believe the contemporary world is terrifying precisely because it is such fertile

ground for utopias. Multinational corporations are springing up all over: organizations that have no origin, no place, utopian, without future, even without any particular *raison d'être*. One moment they're making candy, the next transatlantic liners, and within a week, transatlantic liners full of candy. Some of them are designed to make money; others, like the UN Forces, run at a loss. Some are essentially prophylactic; others, like the Church, militate in favor of Goodness, and still others — like a certain Hollywood — in favor of Wickedness. All are utopian, all believe that happiness is the orchestration of attitudes deemed good by the opinion polls. As far as these new utopias are concerned, a happy man is a man who says he's happy and is believed. Why is he believed? Because his happiness is explicable: it's source is a shirt, or a perfume, or a fire, or a story we've just been told in pictures. Professor Arnold Schwarzenegger has explained that from now on Hollywood will only produce stories that human beings can adore. Idol stories, prefigured in sure-fire scripts and directed according to rules that have the force of law. By their very definition, stories for everyone don't exist in any particular place: they are utopian. In order to manufacture such tales, we are inventing, manufacturing, and experimenting with utopian images — placeless, rootless images. For the time being these pictures still use stars as models — like Mister Schwarzenegger. Soon any connection with preexisting people and things will be superfluous.

I would like to discuss such utopian images. In order to do so, however, I propose to use rhetorical techniques borrowed from ancient Chinese sophists, from the era of the Warring Kingdoms, before the Empire (for instance, Li Si, from the third century B.C.). These sophists believed that in order to convince people of the gravity or importance of a particular problem, the thing to do was not to dismember it, or break it down into its component syllogisms, but to surround it with rhetorical figures. For example, I would not say that it is unjust to expel foreigners from France, but rather: you who so love Arabian jewels and Colombian coffee, how can you claim that everything foreign is detestable? I will commence my investigations into utopian images with a detail from my own personal history.

My story begins in a restaurant-bar with an ominous name: Il Bosco. Some thirty years ago, this forest of the night became the meeting-place for a modest group of about one hundred students who enjoyed behaving like monsters in the visions of the famous Flemish painter, Hieronymous Bosch. The students gathered around the tables in the hope of forgetting the lies they'd been taught during the day at the university, and in between conceptual demolitions they occasionally came to devise (and allow themselves to be seduced by) various contradictory utopias. Here I wish to recall three of these tables. Each resembled something out of Ramón Llull's emblematic novels — allegorical representations of utopia. They all aimed to represent the entire world.

The first table was situated between the soda fountain and the bar, on the left-hand side. It contained future lawyers and students from the Education Institute. They devised, criticized, and practiced to every degree a utopia which assumes the shape of that monster known as the Chimera. Its body is composed of three distinct creatures: the head of a woman represents an allegorical vision of a society governed by the sciences to achieve social justice; the body is androgynous and represents the fraternal union of impoverished and exploited peoples; and the limbs of a lion represent Latin American unity and patriotic war.

The second group sat at a table at the back of the restaurant, on the right, in the darkest and most woody corner of the establishment. There, in shady excremental vapors, were the commentators on Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell. They belonged to the School of Sciences. Their tutelary creature was the Cheshire Cat from *Alice in Wonderland* and their secret utopia, the conception of a world in which problems vanished once they were shown to be logically inconsistent.

The other table stood at the back of the restaurant, but on the left, where the light was brightest. Around this monothematic table were gathered only former students, all enthusiastic lovers of cinema. They practiced the art of classical memory. Their monster was the Golem. They were anti-utopian, or rather they feared a utopian world where virtual images, voices, and faces would one day replace the real.

Thirty years later. We are at the end of the twentieth century. Of all these spicy utopias nothing is left except ethereal, half-consumed, half-transparent angelic figures, predigested and homeopathic. A world governed according to the laws of justice and the principles of reason and scientific method has mutated into one vast electronic game in which cabalistic players — I mean bank clerks dressed like devastated burghers of Calais, their beards trimmed, hair shaved, a rope around their necks — engage in a massive exchange of coded text. The winner takes away more than he can consume. The loser hands over what he never had. Beyond the ramparts of the Ideal City, vast encampments of human beings wander in their amnesia, deprogrammed, half dead, driven on the quest of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse: a pure state of war, a raging pestilence, a hunger no food can quench, and a death which annihilates the very concept of death. All are governed by fear, the Janus-faced general. One of his gazes is Terror, the patron of war-struck lands; the other is Panic, son of Pan. Emiliano, the professor of rhetoric, heard a cry from the deck of a windswept boat off the island of Paxos: "Tamo, Tamo, when you reach Palode, tell them the great God Pan is dead." That cry unleashed the inconsolable lament of whole cities. It was answered quite recently by a Japanese counsellor to President Bush — "whose name I choose not to remember" — when he declared that Saint Augustine, the god of infinite progress, was dead. Pan's assassin is gone. History is over. Pan will rise again.

The second utopia, which dreamed that logic could sweep away all problems, has had no better luck. The world, sum total of all events, lies concealed or at least cloaked in possible occurrences: what might have been has supplanted what really was, and what could be is replacing what will be. In this world it is possible to maintain that the Second World War did not take place, that the Trojan War will not take place, that we will not take place either. In the world of plausible scenarios we can live several lives and die repeatedly, on one condition, that we submit to the eternal law of "Enargeia": *evidentia narrativa*. What I call "narrative clarity" is the territory in which today's rhetorical persuasion elaborates its fictional stories. Its ground rules have developed since the nineteenth century. They are all founded on a supremacy of the plausible over a dusty, incoherent

reality that is almost impossible to believe. Nowadays we can no longer say, "He threw off the mask and revealed his true nature." We can only say, "He put on the mask and showed what he is."

The rules governing cinema (let's say, Hollywood cinema) are identical to the simulation that is life today. This utopia reformulates the idea of salvation whose most perfect application is to be found in the theory of central conflict: the greater homage you render to narrative clarity or Enargeia, the better your chances to be saved. These rules are largely based on ancient Greek games dominated by chance and vertigo. We have even resurrected forgotten games. Games of endurance — proving yourself against torture — and games of survival. In this permanent Olympiad, the citizens of the Ideal City are constantly pitched against each other in single combat. Each move of our heroes is evaluated, and even each intention. The others, the disenfranchised, are pariahs.

Not long ago, referring to the Soffri trial in Italy, Carlo Ginzburg pointed out that History and Law exist in parallel. Law is the daughter of Medicine (from which it inherited a tendency to investigate natural phenomena and to inquire into their origins) and of Rhetoric (which taught it the means of persuasion learned in the courts of justice). The man of the law, the narrator, and that passive consumer of possible facts who is the spectator of our audiovisual forms, are all slaves of plausibility. Not so long ago, the narrator was sovereign; he did not have to take narrative rules into account when deciding the possible events his creatures were going to experience. In those days the narrator was a magician-king, empowered to execute and resurrect his characters at will. But that kind of power no longer exists. Such authority — which Carl Schmitt, in his *Political Theology*, called "the ability to opt for the exceptional" — has vanished both from the audiovisual world and from the real world. Indeed, there is a relation between the control exercised over politicians by the judiciary and the control exercised over the possible world of audiovisual stories by the technicians of communication, who are, in a sense, mediating judges. Just as a citizen cannot adopt another citizen older than he (for this would be against nature), just as a legally married corpse necessarily resurrects as a bachelor (a situation less absurd than it might seem, since in some countries,

including my own, such resurrection is the only way to divorce and remarry), in the same way, the motives and the behavior of the creatures who live within us — and who provide us with moral guidance from our television sets — have no right to be unbelievable. Like the universe described by ancient Chinese philosophers, the characters are the fruit of a complex web of codes which arise out of that emotional lottery called the opinion poll. Motives, actions, and ends are governed by these polls. New laws have recently been written against TV violence. Showing a murder has in itself been deemed to be murder, or at least an incitement to murder. This logic conceals an argument which lies beneath many recent upheavals in the audiovisual world: crime, love stories, a craving for a particular dish — all these realities are said to be born on the screen. I don't mean to say this is a dramatically new situation. People and animals have dreamed of imaginary figures for centuries, and they have often imitated, studied, and tried to govern such chimeras. Michel Jouvet suggests when we pass through that stage which is called paradoxical sleep, we are not only erasing superfluous memory, but we may also be deciding what is going to happen when we awaken again: whether we'll have cancer, what new theories to invent, and so on. What is new is our ability to make such dreams objective, to make them mechanical, to control and stage them like actors staging an already written play. What is new is the interaction of the stories and opinions of the audiovisual world with the everyday world — which is becoming more fragile every day. The boundary lines are vanishing. I don't just mean that we are guilty of complicity with any one aspect of the audiovisual world, but that all of our "I"s are fraternizing with the multiple "they"s fashioned in the never-never land of the screen.

Around the year 1920, in Paris, Pierre Janet announced that he had discovered a mental disorder which he called, provisionally, "dual" or "multiple" personality. Following research into what had up to then been called a simple hysterical condition, he thought he had discovered that certain patients were capable of living more than one life at the same time, provided these lives were punctuated by periods of agitation followed by long periods of amnesia. He had, in fact, just discovered the notorious MPD, or multipersonality disorder: a madness for the twenty-first century. Franck Putman

describes patients with twenty or more personalities, for whom psychoanalysis is meaningless since each personality possesses its own separate unconscious, allowing multiple combinations of psychic worlds plugged one into the other. The therapy now becomes almost as weird as the disease. You're dealing with conglomerates of virtual individuals — virtual and yet also real, since each one has its own perception of the world and reacts differently to the same intake. Within the common body, vegetarians and carnivores coexist. The unifying individuality suffers: it cannot sleep, since at any given time there is always one personality which remains awake, and it cannot ever be happy, since there is always one discontented personality in the mix. In order to integrate these conglomerate personalities, they must be organized into non-profit cooperatives, churches, or corporations, in which a CEO and a board of directors can be appointed democratically by the ensemble of virtual personalities. Sometimes a government department or a penitentiary provides a better structure. Every patient has the ability to organize his or her own little world, according to a set of rules provided by professors of dramatic writing, who are consulted on a frequent basis.

If I have gone on at length about this disease, it is because it prefigures an actively imaginary world, partly virtual and partly real. In these worlds, fragments of audiovisual matter from one side of the camera communicate with fragments of people on the other. These fragments live in suspension, caught between two worlds of active shadows. Both will be governed by a new social contract whose content we cannot yet know. Faced with this, the unsettling question posed by the writer Philip K Dick is more relevant than ever: What can we do to build a world that will not fall apart tomorrow?

Into this world erupts the third utopian monster, the one devised by the film buffs at the back table. Let us try to examine it with yesterday's eyes. We will conceive a world of illusion composed of utopian images sprung from nowhere, a world with its own laws of perspective, born of a system invented in the seventeenth century by the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher and his friend Juan Caramuel, according to rules inspired by the *ars combinatoria*. All this has been re-discovered in our own era by fractal geometers and addicts of virtual reality.

Let us try and reformulate the problem as it appeared to us in the early sixties. One day, strolling down the calle San Diego in Santiago, Chile, one of us comes across a movie theater. He feels like going inside. No one is there to sell him a ticket, no film is advertised, but war-movie sound-effects and familiar music might indicate there is some kind of screening going on. He enters the theater, never to reemerge. The movie is so realistic he cannot be sure he has ever left it. I'm talking, of course, about the total movie. It will affect not only sight and hearing, but also the other senses, smell, touch, and taste. Tiny muscular twitching will make us think we are running or jumping or caressing the flesh of a woman we love; vague salivation will suffice to mimic appetite. Time is difficult to grasp. Instants take forever, minutes stretch long, hours pass painfully, days parade by, months reel into months, years take flight (I'm quoting the poet Nicanor Parra). Roger Munier has taught us to distrust photography and cinema. His pamphlet *Against Images* is still explosive stuff. In little more than sixty pages, he summarizes all the arguments against photography, cinema, and above all utopian imagery. All the fears and almost all the ideas which we expressed in the sixties are in this exposé. Here let me just mention one remark, which in its time brought down a storm of declarations, counter-declarations, and reprimands, enough to fill dozens of volumes. This is it: language is discourse *about* the world, photography and cinema are languages *of* the world. The world speaks through its images in an inarticulate way, and each sequence of moving icons is either illusory or stripped of all meaning (because void of all discourse). These are mere images whose eloquence confers a power of illusion. They are overloaded with meanings, photogenic, and for this reason believed capable of changing the world. Seeing someone we love in a photograph means seeing that person twice over: in the first moment we recognize what we know, and in the second we no longer know what we are gradually recognizing, in a mass of details which remain invisible to the naked eye and which the lens renders eloquent.

Walter Benjamin called such an overturning of basic givens "the photographic unconscious." He believed there was a corpus of signs capable of conspiring against visual convictions, even of destroying them. Taking a somewhat different tack, Moholy-Nagy believed that because machines allow for mechanical recording they

render information impure — a dust-cloud of meaningless signs which, depending on its treatment and under certain lights, can take on the desired form and acquire an aura. Aura is precisely what the philosophers claimed cinema was lacking. Some hold that aura is the fundamental characteristic of art. From that nexus of conceivable, possible, alternative, criminal, and perfect worlds which is art, cinema and photography were excluded — though only after theorists had entertained the idea of cinema as a total art in which the various forms (theater, novels, painting, music) would converge and reflect each other. Within this total form the separate arts were arranged in groups that swiftly became hierarchies, subject to constant revision and displacement. Sometimes music came to the fore, sometimes story, sometimes light. Since cinema had no aura, perhaps it could borrow one from the other arts — but performing and orchestrating a painting or painting a symphony always led to an overload of new, unnecessary signs. The distraction that characterizes systems of mechanical reproduction made it impossible to maintain strict boundaries and keep out extraneous signs. And this gave rise to a suspicion: does cinema actually *multiply* what is already an overabundance of superfluous signs? A purification technique would be needed to control this photogenics or photogenius; perhaps it would even be necessary to create images containing no disruptive signs, images from nowhere, utopian images.

Allow me two digressions, in boomerang form. The first concerns an encyclopaedia called the *Compendium of the Five Agents*, written in the sixth century A.D. by the scholar Chiao Yi. In this cosmological game, the author proposes a set of rules for creating the Universe through rather amusing combinations of five elements. These elements are: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. They are all subject to primal respiration, the breathing of the Cosmos. They communicate and interact according to rules which are not very different from those of a game we played in junior school called German tag. This game is composed of three symbolic elements, a sheet of paper, a stone, and scissors, which act out chance according to the following principles: the stone beats the scissors because it bends them, the scissors beats the paper because they cut it, and the paper beats the stone because it wraps around it. In the Chinese game there are five elements and their combinations are

infinitely more complex, but they too are based on common sense: fire burns wood, wood floats on water, water extinguishes fire, and so forth. The same holds for human behavior, the passage of the seasons, the correspondence of colors and sounds, the interactions of the earth and the intestines of animals, all organized by the lottery of the five fundamental elements. In the combinatory world of the *Compendium of the Five Agents*, interpretation and prophecy are identical — and in any case, since our lives swing between moments of eternity, between fullness and emptiness, the world is nothing more than an image of the world. The real world and the painting of the world are indistinguishable. Let me illustrate this idea with a few Chinese tales, prefiguring or predicting realities born now of nothingness, now of images of the world.

The Emperor Sung Sung asked the painter Li Chin Chi to paint the screens of his bedroom. The painter drew a landscape of mountains and waterfalls. A few days later the Emperor complained: "Your waterfalls make too much noise. I can no longer sleep."

Ha Kang, a painter of horses, was one day visited by a man in red who said: "I have been sent by the spirits. They urgently request you to paint a horse because they need one badly." Ha Kang obeyed. After a few preliminary sketches, he drew the horse in a single stroke, burnt the picture and gave the messenger the ashes. Years later, the painter met a veterinarian friend. The veterinarian brought him a horse with a limp. Ha Kang recognized it immediately: "That's the horse I painted" he said. At once, the horse fell down, died, and vanished into thin air. Greatly concerned, the painter returned to his studio and examined the preliminary sketches. His embarrassment mounted when he discovered that in one sketch there was a minor defect in the horse's left leg, due, no doubt, to a flaw in the breath behind his brushwork.

Hu Tao Tzu vanished into the mists of a painting he had just completed.

Huang Mo, a wandering painter of the T'ang dynasty known for his wild drunkenness, liked to paint clouds which he then arranged according to the principles of Shih-T'ao, by shouting and jeering at them. The clouds obeyed just as if they were well-raised humans. When he died he was laid out in a coffin, but he escaped

through a crack before burial and turned himself into a cloud, rising to the sky in peals of laughter. End of my first digression.

The second takes place in Russia, during the early years of the socialist experiment. Pavel Aleksandro Florenski, the orthodox priest, wrote two short essays whose ideas I would like to reflect on. "Inverted Perspective" was an attack on the cliché which holds that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century icons are just charming sketches, or successful examples of naive art. Like Kurt Gödel, Florenski was a mystic in the skin of a mathematician. He showed that in many icons, including the most famous, what appears to be no more than clumsiness, or indeed an absence of perspective, is actually a strictly inverted perspective. He gives an example. If you examine the forms of inclined figures — like the image of Saint Procopius writing the Gospel as dictated by Saint John — you will notice that the figures and the sacred objects are shown both frontally and laterally. The evangelist is shown as a whole, but from three or even four different angles. The lines of perspective do not converge at a vanishing point in the background of the image; rather they diverge. I suppose that the artist inverted the rules in a quest for synthesis, so as to suggest that the point of convergence of the parallel lines in the picture cannot be situated outside the frame, but only where the spectator stands. After briefly recapitulating the historical and mythical origins of perspective, Florenski outlines the theory that in all pictorial representation two forces are at play, the first being the illusion of reality created by the laws of perspective, and the second, an expressive image composed of arbitrary canonical signs which represent truth. Note that Florenski does not claim canonical signs are true, and perspective false. He simply states: "The representation of man and his environment always requires a combination of sacred signs, one of which functions like Chinese pictorial calligraphy, the other like theatrical artifice." Florenski maintains that the inventor of scenic perspective is Anaxagoras, who further suggested that human representation of the deities should be replaced by hot stones placed in concentric circles around a hearth (somewhat as on the island of Chiloé, when locals cook a *curanto*). In 470 B.C., the set designer of Aeschylus, Agatharka, introduced *trompe-l'oeil* backdrops into stage design — inducing Anaxagoras and Democritus to examine the rules that govern linear perspective.

In a second essay, written just before his arrest and execution, Florenski raised a matter which I believe will lie at the center of future polemics over the new images. For centuries, one of the chief aims of visual representation has been to show the invisible, by using the capacity of images to reveal or render evident certain realities which cannot be shown, either because they are too abstract or because their nature is divine. In Byzantium, the problem turned into a civil war with a large number of casualties. From Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite to German expressionism, from Wang Wei to P. J. Farmer — by way of Piero della Francesca, Rembrandt, and Swedenborg — the question of representing the invisible has gone round the world, eaten its own tail, and slipped free of the dream that gave it birth. This, because behind the theory lies hidden one of humanity's permanent aspirations, as tenacious as the will to fly or to be immortal: I mean our desire to see God, to see the beyond, to see what cannot be shown, to see not with our eyes but with our very soul. Since this a matter of dreams, Florenski's first step was to see what could slip free from the dull *doxa* of psychoanalysis. In a dream, the dreamer crosses a field, reaches a church, watches the faithful entering with their prayer-books, and decides to go in, at which point he is distracted by a farmer climbing the steps of the church tower, entering the belfry, and ringing the bells. The sound of the bells recedes and gradually changes into the sound of an alarm-clock. The dreamer awakes. In another dream, the dreamer is in a sleigh. It is winter. He is longing to cross the snowy plain, but the reindeer won't move. He urges them on impatiently with a whip. Just as they are about to leave, the beasts ring the bells on their harnesses, and the sound of the bells turns into the ringing of an alarm clock. In a third dream, the dreamer finds himself at home, meets a servant coming out of the dining-room to go into the kitchen with a pile of porcelain crockery. Anxious that she'll break his crockery, the dreamer urges her to be careful, but he makes her nervous and the whole pile comes crashing down. The sound of plates crashing turns musical and recedes. It is the alarm clock again. Florenski is not particularly interested in what the dreams conceal, or fail to reveal, but in the fact that all three tales are determined. In other words that an alarm-clock can be both the origin and terminus of a vision.

Let us suppose that visual or audiovisual representation can dominate, control, and develop the ability to construct stories contained in a virtual audio image, which falls in the placid pool of the soul and agitates it, provoking a romantic storm with specific and general visions. The utopian image discussed with such great irony by the company of our third allegorical table — film lovers and dream experts — partakes of two distinct dream-types. One, like flying or never dying, has been an eternal hope of humanity, while the other, including electricity and computers, is wholly unexpected (I borrow this distinction from Arthur C. Clarke). From time immemorial, visualizing or materializing human aspiration, from the most carnal to the most spiritual, from spending a night of love with an actress dead more than fifty years or to seeing the face of God, these have always been predictable. Seeing the world with a way pigeon's eye has not. Extending the body beyond its limits is part of everyone's imagination, as is ubiquity or miniaturization or gigantism; but in the catalogue of all our images and books, a smooth transition from one picture to another — like the image of your balance in a bank machine — was something nobody expected. Thus it is that in every reasonable aspiration, like immortality or levitation, there are unexpected aspects: we knew that man would one day fly, but not that he would fly inside a house, and be able to eat a chicken while moving at ultrasonic speed. We longed for immortality and now our soulless bodies will enjoy immortal life. Why shall we not fear that tomorrow the dream of supplanting the real world will lead to other unexpected inventions, to the point where there will be nothing but alterity, since all will be the realm of the unexpected?

Before any investigation of utopian images themselves, a naive question occurs to me, one I am not sure we can answer. Do we all see the same things? For example, if a coin is displayed, can we be sure that your coin is identical to mine? Ames and Murphy, two humorists and theorists of perception, are convinced that the answer is no. A group of physiologists who call themselves "functionalists" claim to have proved by various tests that the visible world is limited by past experience. Experimenting on rich children and poor children, they say they can prove that the same coin looks larger to a poor person than to a rich one. Other experiments, for instance one

involving three chairs seen through a keyhole, suggest that the conditions under which something is viewed are ultimately what determines the size of the object.

The history of visual perception includes innumerable theories. I'd like to quote two, from the studies of Molineux and Clérambault. Molineux asks: "If a man blind from birth suddenly recovers his sight and sees a sphere and a cube of which he has previous tactile knowledge, will he be able to tell them apart by sight alone?" This is a question which has provoked many contradictory replies. But whether we decide (as the nativists do) that like any other human being the blind man is equipped from birth with archetypal images of both shapes, or that the interconnection between tactile and visual experiences allows immediate recognition (the empiricist belief), or that a period of transition is required, or that visual objects appear as continuous surfaces (such that a joint operation of touch, sight, and movement is necessary in order to understand them), still the underlying principle of each of these responses will be the same, namely that reality can be articulated and reproduced. The outside world possesses a grammar which we can describe and use to invent an entirely artificial world, to which absolutely fresh experiences can be added, even if they are experienced only in that controlled reality which we call a utopian image. But the problem is not really to decide whether or not we are capable of inventing a world which can replace the entire world of our senses, but to discover what other mechanical worlds are accessible through this utopian vision.

Here are two very simple examples which belong to the audiovisual world that prefigures utopian images. In his memoirs describing a cataract operation, Gaëtan de Clérambault says of the moment in which vision suddenly returns: "Naturally, at first there was a general impression of visual flux, as though underwater. Then, an imprecise notion of distance, bringing things into closer range: if I wanted to pick something up, I knew from experience I had to reach some ten centimeters further than where I saw the object.... Every source of light caused an imperfectly geometrical figure of constant form. My right eye saw a saw something like a treble-clef, leaning backwards with the lower element obliquely elongated. At

night, the brilliant light of street lamps and display windows appeared like so many treble-clefs.... For my left eye, less affected, the false image was smaller: it was like a somewhat scalene raspberry, I mean with an oblique base, sketched out in glowing filaments.... When the light sources are numerous and close together, for instance watching sunlight in the leaves of a tree, the whole forms a most curiously disciplined ensemble. All the figures seem to be resting on a singular kind of grid, more intuited than perceived. For the right eye (the one seeing treble-clefs) this grid is lozenge-shaped.... For the left eye (the one seeing the flaming raspberries) the links of the grid are square.... The eye from which the cataract was removed tends to modify all colors by the addition of a bit of blue.... Strong, dark colors are not changed; light colors change slightly in dominant tone, sometimes agreeably so: pink takes on a violet hue, a violet-pink turns a rarer color still; stark tones tend to disappear." A painter who had recently undergone a cataract operation described how he saw cylinders everywhere, and had lost the notion of right-angles: everything he saw was trapezoidal. It seems to me that the visual phenomena described by Clérambault are of two kinds. The first, arbitrary, compensatory images, remind me of Florenski's canonical signs. The others could be called aquatic images, or flux forms, which invade areas left empty by defective vision. This process of compensation is what preoccupies the architects of utopian images, which are better known as virtual reality or computer graphics. There is a superstition — or belief, or scientific truth supported by experiment — which says that cinema is the art of stimulating a part of the brain that normally functions during sleep, by bombarding it with static images juxtaposed so as to create the illusion of movement. Video, on the other hand, in which the image is liquid, is said to stimulate another part of the brain which functions only while the body is awake. Whether the distinction is scientifically valid or not is irrelevant here. What is interesting is the suggestion that we can intervene to provoke virtual images by using the brain's compensatory mechanisms. A group of people who are involved in manufacturing special effects for the Lucas company in Hollywood discussed with me the possibility of making "personalized" animated films exclusively out of such images. The principal obstacle is that the brain needs twenty or thirty seconds to process

the first image, but once the first image is reconstituted the others can run off in animated series using the same basic pattern. We went further, though, and from these flux-images we imagined film sequences in which abstract animated images would provoke different responses in each one of us. Each spectator would be watching a different three-dimensional film than his neighbor, for each would have visual uncertainties (fluxes) of his own.

Let's go back to the idea of reconstituting fictional sequences from the terminal images examined by Florenski. If a series of abstract images, each but little different from the next, can provoke a cascade of three-dimensional figures, and if each cascade can in turn provoke virtual memories of things that might have been, then we can conceive the possibility of abolishing the distinction between waking and dreaming, past and present, and above all between conceivable pasts, conceivable futures, and the present. Florenski describes the following situation: a man faints just before being taken to the guillotine. He is borne on a stretcher to the scaffold. As he nears the guillotine he awakens, but before that he experiences an inverted illusory sequence in which he sees the whole of his life go by — except that it isn't actually his life, but a life invented by him. The vision ends with what provoked the dream: his decapitation. These films, or lives, or dreams, are much closer to reality than we think, though it is much too soon to know what damage or what benefit they will bring us. We do know that utopian worlds with no beginning, no end, and no location have already invaded the future — and that only criticism, and criticism of that criticism, will help us dominate them, destroy them, or at least understand them.

At the beginning of the century, faced with the explosion of modernity and its new social, philosophical, and urban problems, the Bauhaus devised an approach of both criticism and integration. Today the accumulation of images, of information and disinformation, the distribution of irrational products, and a kind of new viral culture as well, all produce a rush of images and signs as well as a host of new problems for urbanism: new, invisible, multimedia cities, virtual and utopian. The utopian world does not culminate in the realization of man's aspirations, but in their derealization. It is a world which has rendered man himself unreal. It

is the era of assembly-line reproductions of perfect worlds, conceivable worlds, all seemingly different but all governed by the same laws of *evidentia narrativa*. In a lecture given towards the beginning of this century, under the title *Papalagi* or white man, a Melanesian chieftain remarked that the whites enjoy bottling everything up. They like to bottle up the shades of the past on film, or to bottle up feet, determining how they will walk on pavement. Everyone believes they have their own walk but actually everyone obeys their shoes. The point is not only that we are creating new necessities for ourselves, as has so often been said, but that the solution to all the problems in the world can be simulated and resolved by the projection of a utopian world. New images act directly on the eye; they make us believe in transitions, races, jumps, impossible movements, they can touch things that don't exist and will soon be able to use nervous system stimulations to produce a "roast beef effect." Interactive reality is, or will be, capable of allowing intervention in the stories that virtual images tell. I do not believe that the result of all these inventions is that there is no such thing as the real world. Jean Baudrillard has elaborated with subtle paranoia on some of the sophistry which the world of utopian imagery has brought forth; I have nothing to add to that department.

Personally, I'm better at making images than theorizing them. I have worked on these things, and to a certain extent I feel responsible for some of the frightening machines I have described. And yet I do not think that their propagation is as dangerous as the disinterest which they will inevitably provoke. Such machines have existed before. They have been invented over and over again by poets and prophets and artists. The risks and fascinating possibilities were described long before electricity and computers made them possible. What is frightening is rather the time at which they have appeared. This is an era when any human activity is configured as a preparation for war. The laws of competition have generalized a presumption that the "other" is guilty. The illusion that unreal lives may be lived — what the science fiction writer William Gibson calls "consensual hallucination" — is perhaps the best way of killing off superfluous humans: that vast mass of invisible men whom we never see, and never wish to see, those whom the philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls "the community to come." These universal exiles

move from one land to the next, crisscrossing the world, changing languages and centuries. Enveloping them in utopian imagery and losing them there would be the best way of imprisoning them. All the while, a minority which believes itself the majority will go on producing new forms of virtuality: virtual love, virtual crimes with real casualties, virtual audiences, virtual countries (with real people), virtual poverty (with real paupers).

In an essay from 1919, Paul Valéry wrote: "Now we civilizations know we are mortal." I'd like to end with my reply — that now we utopias know we are immortal.

CHAPTER III

Images of Images

Requiem is the title of a novel by Antonio Tabucchi. I would like to evoke an episode about halfway through this book, which recounts the hero's search for Fernando Pessoa. The scene takes place in a Lisbon museum, just after closing time. Walking through the empty rooms, the hero comes across an amateur painter who has let himself be locked in for the night. This man is a retired government official who spends his nights copying a painting by Hieronymous Bosch. All his copies are several times larger than the original and represent only one part of it; but because he has added other details, his version is more exact. Without knowing it, this painter is imitating the work of the Dutch copyists as described by Henry James. Exacting craftsmen, these copyists added details to the paintings they reproduced, in order to make their versions more realistic. Thus it may be possible to conceive of a painting which becomes more and more realistic each time it is copied, until the potential for realism is saturated, far beyond the effect known as "photo-realism." Other copyists preferred to depict whole groups of paintings from private collections or their own studios: paintings about paintings. These are examples of a single phenomenon. One original image generates other images which are at once a fragment of, a reflection of, and an improvement on the original image. Some critics consider this painting a symptom of artistic decadence, a sort of cancer, complete with inflammation and proliferation.

Copying the work of someone who has done nothing but copy nature might well be considered an act of modesty. But are

artists truly able to copy? Monteverdi invented opera while believing to imitate Greek theater. In the act of copying, there are two separate and divergent things. One is specialization, the other is involuntary invention. In the preceding chapter I referred to a novel by Kasimierz Brandys in which a man from Warsaw looks for his old house in the reconstructed city of Warsaw. The men who rebuilt Warsaw often used Canaletto's paintings for reference — Canaletto being one of the few painters who employed the angle/reverse angle technique, making him extremely useful for the architects of reconstruction. Naturally, Canaletto's pictures were painted centuries before the war. Using these paintings, the men who rebuilt Warsaw produced a fascinating antichrony: post-war Warsaw became the ancestor of the pre-war city.

But let us return to our examples of copying. In the first, a medium-sized picture is chosen; we select a detail and enlarge it. The brush strokes should appear in the enlargement. But that is not the desired effect. The desired effect is that the painting should retain the same smooth texture. Hence the addition of new and improved details. This kind of enlargement actually produces an effect opposite to photographic enlargement. In a sense, we are drawn into the picture. But suppose that the copyist is devoid of imagination. Unable to add new detail, he only augments the realism of the details that were already there. For instance, when a detail from a rose is magnified, he does not think to add dew drops. Little by little, this process of enlargement brings us toward pure surface — or desert. Now let us suppose the copyist is someone with a penchant for completion, a centripetal form of imagination. He will be unable to resist painting dew drops in which the whole picture, the spectator, and all the surroundings are anamorphically reflected. He will add the petals' pores, scenes from the everyday life of bacteria, and finally molecular structures. He will have painted a completely different picture. Yet these are not the only ways in which an excess of faithfulness can distort an original work.

Imagine a totalitarian society. For some reason only one painting is allowed, and the only permissible artistic activity is copying this painting. Any variation, reinterpretation, or visual commentary on the painting is severely punished. Nevertheless, by

mistake or perhaps for political reasons, copying details is authorized. This freedom has led one painter to take one percent of the painting and blow it up one hundred times. At this scale, he has felt able to risk a slight alteration in point of view. In successive reproductions, the point of view varies slightly each time. The original fragment, a detail of the nose of the President (the only subject of the original painting), gradually slips from a frontal view to profile. For years the painter works on hundreds of details each blown up a hundredfold, until he has exhausted his material. The painter dies and his disciples set out to reconstitute his work. Naively, they believe that by recomposing the totality of the fragments they will obtain a reproduction of the original painting from the original angle. In fact, the reconstitution proves impossible: there is not one realistic picture seen frontally, but hundreds of angles, giving the ensemble a cubist feel — and cubism, in this country, is highly illegal. But if every detail is put in a specific order and projected at a speed of twenty-four details a second, the result is a film giving the impression of a tour around the authorized face.

Now imagine another artist in the same totalitarian society. A conformist. He enjoys copying only the authorized painting, altering neither size nor angle. But he is a perfectionist and cannot help correcting certain imperfections in the image. Problems of perspective, for instance. Like most so-called realist painters, the original painter used different types perspective in different parts of the picture. In the background, for example, the lines of perspective are bent, as if he were using a wide-angle lens. In some parts of the edge, however, objects near to the spectator seem smaller than objects in the distance — as though a long lens had been employed. Only in the center of the picture, where the President sits, have the classical rules of perspective been observed. The first thing the copyist does is to standardize the perspective, which makes the painting seem oddly crowded and claustrophobic. Then the copyist notices that some of the shadows seem out of place. They do not correspond to any plausible light source. So he decides to make the shadows logical. Consequently, he finds himself adding details and objects in areas which were originally in shadow, but are now illuminated; for example, the chair at the back of the picture upon which a cat lies sleeping. This chair was formerly half in shadow and is now in light.

The chair, and the cat as well, cannot possibly be left in a state of half-existence. The copyist must complete them. But now he is afraid. He has taken liberties. He has decided that the cat's tail will fall to the right, not the left. Worse yet, a shadow — unjustified by any possible light source — had formerly concealed part of the President's face. Removing the shadow is embarrassing, because the President has a hairy mole exactly where the shadow was. But perhaps the original painter's decision to conceal the mole with an illogical shadow was merely a hint to future copyists that they should do something with this mole, of which, it must be noted, everyone in the country was well aware. Maybe the inexplicable proliferation of shadows was really a way of putting the copyists' realism to the test. After a long period of equivocation, the copyist is seized with obsessive precision; he cannot help moving the shadow and painting the hairy mole. When all the illogical shadows are removed, a host of new elements appear. Unfortunately, other symbolic objects have now become invisible. As is well known, all official paintings are allegorical — and this is even more true in a country where only one painting is authorized. The now-vanished objects had been tirelessly studied, until they produced a set of norms which summed up the country's unique national philosophy. All that was swept away. And in its place arose a new problem. The copy is excessive in its sameness, its *mismidad*, its lifelike quality, and this overzealousness makes it seem provocative — almost dissident. Moreover, the copyist has not been systematic in his application of the principles of realism. He has, for example, corrected the President's cross-eyedness, and thus undermined the magic of his gaze. Like Van der Weyden's painting used by Nicholas of Cues, or like certain cheap icons, the President's eyes seemed to stare down at anyone, wherever they happen to be standing. Now he only looks in one direction and seem to see no one at all, nor even to care about the fate of his subjects. In this copy, the President has become unattractive and severe. His posture — and the position of his hand in particular — powerfully suggests that the Boss is desperate to scratch his mole. The painter is condemned to death and dies, astonished.

A third painter has learned to copy the painting with a minimal number of strokes. Five or six are enough. Close up, all

sense of realism evaporates, but seen from a distance, the painting is perfectly credible. So the painter decides to go against convention and paint a landscape of his home town, in which each detail is composed of the five or six strokes of his official portrait — a sort of pointillism. At first, the picture causes a scandal. The painter is about to be condemned to death. But the President pardons him, saying that even though the subject-matter is illegal, the picture conforms in spirit to the laws of artistic activity. Mysteriously, he declares: "Everything about this painting reminds me of myself." So in the end, the picture is accepted. From now on, there are two paintings to be copied. A new generation of copyists prefers the new official picture. Two schools arise: those who enlarge the image and those who perfect it. Adding details which bring the image closer to the landscape, the first group gradually eliminates all trace of the President's face. The others accentuate the five basic strokes and conclude that only one painting is conceivable, the one representing the face of the President. The painters of the second school are honored; those of the first are condemned to death. Towards the end of his life, the author of the landscape produces three hundred and sixty-five copies, with minor variations, which when placed side by side in a given order are seen to reproduce the original picture of the Head of State. The painter dies much loved and much respected.

Copying and coupling. The association is inevitable. Art imitates nature. All imitations are copies. Men and women couple to make copies of themselves. *Imitatio Natura*, fiction imitates nature, says Balde. Elsewhere he makes himself more precise: "Fiction imitates the idea and the style of Nature." Thomas Aquinas announces that art is the figure of truth; Blake retorts that lies are also a form of truth. And this, perhaps, is at the origin of a surprising defence of alchemy: since art imitates nature, alchemists do not sin (Oldradus de Ponte). Several rhetoricians also say that law, sovereign of all the arts, imitates nature and — more to the point — nature's processes. The poet Huidobro says, "Do not sing of roses, let them blossom in your poems." Since art imitates nature's behavior, it creates. Imitation in art — at least in poetry — naturally becomes the best way to produce new juridical norms.

If works of art are imitations of nature, the very style and the stuff of nature — or even better yet, its recreation — if artworks really do have the power to create *ex nihilo*, then imitating works of art is probably a good idea. But how far can this be taken? God is said to create every creature individually and by His own hand; he makes each creature individually, because He loves each one individually. God grants His creatures the ability to couple and to copy themselves, but the individuality of each creature is His alone. In the manufacture of creatures, there is no such thing as progress. A 1960 model of human being is no different from a 1980 one. God's work does not progress by substitution but by deepening, said Jacques Maritain. A religious Walter Benjamin would have said that God makes man as a unique work of art, and thus man has a unique aura. People can produce their likes — though many religions have forbidden human reproduction by any other means than coupling (copulating). But if God has definitely given us the capacity to repeat nature's process and, through art, to create, is it not conceivable that machines — which are merely an extension of man — might also be able to create unique works of art, with aura? Benjamin, Susanne Langer, Thomas Aquinas, and (according to certain prophets) God himself, all deny this. In order to have an aura, a work of art requires *manipulatio* or inspired handling. These ideas are not to be brushed aside on the grounds that they are old fashioned. On the contrary, it seems to me that they have considerable political consequences. Pietro della Vigna and Peter the Lombard conclude that since man has been granted the absolution of sin, here and forever more, he must also have the power to create. Hence, the origin of all normative laws must be poetic. Poetry is the authentic copy of nature. Poetry alone can define, identify, and invent laws which are natural precisely because they are poetic. (A contemporary translation error leads us to believe — says Kantorowicz — that the meaning of the Greek term *poiesis* is "creation.") Dante calls poetry rhetorical fiction, subject to the rules of music. But what about painting? And theater? And the arts of recording — which Benjamin called the mechanical arts? In the Middle Ages, painting and sculpture were called *ars mechanicae*, from *moechus*, adulterous or bastard (see Panofsky, *Galileo Critic*).

And what if all of creation were an ensemble of mechanical arts? Being inclined toward digression, I would just like to point out

a few Gnostic variations on the theme of copying. The first of these is reasonably well known, thanks to a delightful article by Borges ("A Vindication of the False Basilides," published in *Discussions*). According to the Argentine author, the idea is based on a theological fiction devised by this heresiarch. I read the text of Basilides quite recently, and I must admit I found nothing like what Borges did, though it is certain that his Basilides is much more plausible than the original. According to Borges, Basilides claims the world was created three hundred and sixty-five times. Each creation was a copy of the previous one, in the same way as videos can be copied — which implies a loss of quality from one generation to the next. Our world is copy number three hundred and sixty-five of the original. A world in tatters, where, as in Chinese painting, fullness and emptiness divide all space among them, the better to teach us imperfection and the fleeting character of existence. Another variation on the arbitrary nature of mechanical copies of the world was invented in the last century by Auguste Blanqui. He thought the world was uncreated and unchanging (let us note that he was an atheist and an atheophile). But thousand of copies of this world were run off nonetheless — like a best-seller. So there are an infinite number of worlds. Nature, however, occasionally makes mistakes. Some of its copies are flawed. In certain worlds, pages may be blank. Other worlds have just one page, infinitely repeated. Other worlds have only minor flaws — one too many bottles of Coca-Cola, one too few Beethoven symphonies.

At least in our Western world, God has given man the right to copy and create. The sexual act remains the most common and the most complex form of copying. The first geneticists saw women as a canvas on which the male sperm painted the features of the child in conception. In Chilean parlance, "to paint someone" is slang for the sexual act. A few years ago I made a film in Tunisia. One of the electricians, who in his youth life had bred birds, told me that female birds — "like women" — are sensitive to color during pregnancy. If, for example, they were put in red cages at this time, their babies would be red. This recalls a Byzantine text by George the Monk, which tells the story of an Empress of the iconoclastic period (under Theophilus, 829-892) who secretly worshipped an icon of Christ. She was discovered because her son was born bearded. Since we are

talking about Christ, is it not true that his image is the most perfect painting of God? (See Vincente Carducho, *Diálogo 7º sobre la pintura*.) The Chilean national anthem claims that Chile is an improved copy of paradise. And so on. But we were discussing the image of God the Son, copy of God the Father, revealed — as a photograph is in the developer — by God the Holy Spirit. Who copies who in this affair, since all three are co-equal and co-eternal? There is a charming Moorish tale from late sixteenth century (the time of Alpujarras war) which seeks to justify the Holy Trinity from the Muslim point of view. Imagine a man looking in the mirror. It is nighttime. A single candle illuminates the man's face. The man is God the Father. His reflection in the glass is God the Son. The candlelight is the Holy Spirit, the mirror is the Virgin. André Breton found a more nightmarish version of this manner of copying in an American propaganda film of the Second World War. A Japanese spy enters America illegally. He goes to a hotel. Alone in his room, he looks in the mirror and becomes two Japanese spies. Soon there are more of them than there are Americans. I thought to myself, "What if they become citizens and elect a Japanese President?" Even more frightening, because this time we are dealing with consistent philosophical concepts, is a thought from the early Wittgenstein: a world in which language can be reduced to clauses, or logical forms, composed of atoms which he claims are images (*Bilder*). The simplest clauses we can voice in our language are incredibly complex when compared with atoms, which makes the exhaustive description of even a single clause impossible. But here the term *image* encompasses much more than just painting. For instance, it can also refer to a musical score copied by musicians, whose copy is itself copied by a recording. Each copy is produced according to different codes — different means. In such a system of correspondences, we must assume that all the arts can copy each other. Let's suppose these correspondences are so precise that after hearing the musical equivalent of *Gone With the Wind* we would be capable of writing the novel, and that a painting inside the film would allow us to transcribe the entire musical score. As though I could recite a poem by whistling its musical equivalent...

In 1924, after a long stint in a mental asylum, the art historian Aby Warburg decided to dedicate the rest of his life (five years) to the constitution of a museum of reproductions. There would be not

one original work in the museum, but only copies organized so as to provoke a theoretical journey on the basis of a particular and premeditated idea of montage, of image juxtaposition. The aim was to point out the connections between figures of different geographic and historic origins which all depict the same behavior (often ecstasy or drunkenness). On the same wall, he hung advertising posters, reproductions of images from classical Greece, Renaissance paintings, newspaper cuttings. The whole thing partook of the multiple language I referred to when discussing the young Wittgenstein. Above all, Warburg was concerned to point out the continuity of the same gestures, the same human attitudes, and the same intensity of feeling throughout history. Some observers have seen in this juxtaposition a continuum of intensity whose effect is to erase all identity.

A common practice in nineteenth-century Parisian salons illustrates the principles of Warburg's theories with troubling precision. I am thinking of what are called *tableaux vivants*. A group of models takes an Old Master and tries to recreate the scene theatrically. They make a set and then take up position inside this artificial decor. But we know that the original painters used live models too. The *tableau vivant* models inevitably make slight, almost imperceptible movements. They must continually strain to maintain the pose. They constantly circle around this pose, which calls out to them but escapes them. A certain physical tension results from this, the same that the original models must have felt. This shared intensity is like a bridge between the two groups of models. The tiny movements of the first group, frozen in the painting, are reproduced by the models in the *tableau vivant*. The first models are in a sense reincarnated — or at least the tension is reincarnated. Certain philosophers, like Nietzsche and Klossowski, have seen an illustration or perhaps even a proof of the eternal return in such reincarnated gestures.

All these ideas must have been in my head before Pierre Klossowski's work made them obvious to me, at which point they crystallized in a theoretical tale. This tale begins towards the end of the fifteenth century. A contemporary of Piero della Francesca's — or perhaps it was Piero himself — goes blind and decides to paint a

picture using a system of his own devising, not very different from Dürer's symmetry of the human body. According to this method, he uses numbers to dictate a painting without needing either to see or to touch the canvas. He dictates and his disciples execute. Two friends come to call on him. As it happens, they are in the painting. The painter has reduced them to mathematical formulae, from memory. One of the friends immediately recognizes himself, the other does not. The painter's system has distorted his face. It has its limits. Some faces may not be comprehended by mathematical formulae. Centuries pass. Towards the very end of the nineteenth century — 1896 — a German painter specializing in the small-scale reproduction of masterpieces discovers the picture dictated by the blind painter. He is surprised to find his own face in the picture. It is the bad portrait of the friend who did not recognize himself. He concludes that since his face was foretold a few centuries before he was born, he has a mission. But what is his mission?

This romantic painter — perhaps he was not German after all, but Austrian, and it is not impossible that his name was Adolf Hitler — decides to reproduce the Renaissance painting, but he alters the composition in such a way that he now stands in the center. The painting, accordingly, is unbalanced. In an access of modesty, he removes himself completely from the composition. But the imbalance is only the worse. He decides to put himself back in the picture, and remove everything else. This makes the picture too melancholy. So he abandons the picture, gives up painting and becomes a politician. The painting, however, survives — an unfinished masterpiece, as in Balzac's short story — without figures, without composition, but covered in a mass of contradictory brush strokes. Over the years, the painting vanishes. Finally it is rediscovered by a party of English territorial soldiers cleaning up a street after a bombing. Among these soldiers, there is an art history teacher who is an enthusiastic fan of modern art. He notices the date on the picture and concludes that the author is an early abstract artist, and, more specifically, an abstract artist of the most contemporary sort. Shortly after hanging the picture in his collection, the collector loses his sight and retires to a home for the blind. The only possession he keeps with him in the home is the painting. He wants to have it with him through the long days of darkness. There's a reason for this: the

picture is tactile. It is almost as if it wants to be touched, as if it can communicate invisible figures by tact. These figures are full of hate and disturbing paranoia. The collector goes mad and commits suicide by banging his head against a neo-classical column. The painting remains in the institution for the blind. Towards the end of the sixties, a rock singer is blinded by the lights of a stadium in which she performs. She is locked up in the cell where the picture hangs. A close relationship develops between the singer and the picture. In fact, she reads it like a musical score. The result is a curious combination of *ars nova* and Prussian military music, with a hint of Mahler and a whiff of Franz Lehar. One of the doctors in the institution is an amateur physiologist who occasionally organizes *son et lumière* charity shows. He decides to translate the blind singer's music into sequences of light and color. The first result provokes an outburst of hysterical laughter which lasts several weeks. As a consequence he dies of a heart attack. Fortunately, his colleagues have had the foresight to record his laughter. They note that this laughter provokes in any audience an irresistible urge to break out dancing. They decide to use these recordings for a medical students' graduation party. During the party, a lung surgeon stabs a colleague maddened by the sound of dancing laughter. Fortunately, a home movie was made during the party and this film is produced as evidence at the trial. One of the members of the jury is an art teacher. He is astonished to observe that the dance is the exact dynamic equivalent of the static choreography of a Renaissance painting. He investigates and discovers that the painting in question was dictated by a blind painter subsequently accused of provoking a crime with this picture. Unfortunately, during the trial, the recordings of laughter are played for the benefit of the jury. The jury breaks out dancing. Dancing wildly, the judge kills the art teacher by stabbing him in the eye with a feather of a pheasant's tail. The case is never explained. With this contorted fiction, I believe I have now reached my destination: making it plausible that every image is but the image of an image, that it is translatable through all possible codes, and that this process can only culminate in new codes generating new images, themselves generative and attractive.

In *Variétés III*, Paul Valéry remarks that the notion of *terra incognita*, the notion that in the world there are regions still

CHAPTER IV

The Photographic Unconscious

This time I'd like to play with an expression invented by Walter Benjamin, "the photographic unconscious." When we examine a photograph, fixed or in movement, a certain number of elements immediately stand out. They escape from the compact collection of themes that constitute the photograph, and then, once escaped, they reconfigure themselves naturally so as to constitute a new motif. Let's take any picture as an example: say, a picture representing the central square of the Province of X. The photo will show us a part of the square, a cathedral in the background, some benches in the shade of ancient trees, and something like fifteen passers-by. Five or six features have been enough to represent the scene. We'll call those five or six features Provincial Square. But there are other elements in the picture whose reason for being escapes us. What function does the dog to the left in the background have? And that man dressed in black, missing his right shoe? And the eagle in the sky? Why do all the passers-by look at the same point off camera? All these unnecessary elements have a tendency, curiously, to reorganize themselves forming an enigmatic corpus, a set of signs that conspires against the ordinary reading of the picture, adding to it an element of uncanniness, of suspicion. We will call that conspiracy, in a provisional way, the photographic unconscious (though the expression is Benjamin's, we will see that it can be extended to phenomena which he probably never imagined).

I will try to examine the phenomena of photography and cinema as seen from the dark jungle of involuntary or uncontrolled signs. I have said involuntary signs, but is there any element in the photo that can really be called voluntary? It is true that when we film a scene, we voluntarily turn the camera in a given direction, and it is also true that when we install a limited group of human beings in front of the lens, we instruct them as to what they should do or say, and it is also true that when we prepare the lights, we do so with the sole purpose of privileging the regions of the image that will best suit the story we are telling, because that's the point: to show a story that the men and women in front of the camera attempt to live out. We could say with pride that in this case any arbitrary, involuntary, unnecessary elements are absent. And if they are there to be seen, the producer will say it is because we haven't done our job properly. But what is properly cinematographic? How does one distinguish, in cinema, a well-done job from a poor one? I'll willingly confide to you that the principal reason that drove me to inquire into the nature of cinema was my inability to tell why a movie is good or bad, and also to find out how it finishes if the word *~end~* is not indicated. I gradually came to understand that every spectator of the movies today is really a "connoisseur," that is, the opposite of a spectator. I take the expression "connoisseur" in Benjamin's sense: in cinema as in sports, the spectators understand what's going on, to the point where they can anticipate what happens next, because they know the rules, by learning or by intuition (the rules of a cinematographic narration are verisimilar, that is, made to be believed, easily legible, because they must be identical to those of the dominant social structure). That's why commercial cinema presupposes an international community of connoisseurs and a shared set of rules for the game of social life. In that sense, commercial cinema is the totalitarian social space par excellence. For instance, if we see a child caught up in the act of lying, and immediately punished by his elders who burn his head with red-hot coals, the audience will find this unbelievable or illicit, which comes down to the same thing. Because among the audience we are not likely to find Aztec spectators from pre-Columbian times, for whom the scene would be didactic, quite believable, and even comic (*cf.* the Mendoza Codex, *Everyday Life of the Aztecs*). A group of Ecuadorian peasants burst into applause

while watching a political film where the army was shown massacring peasants, because their sense of the believable, their practice of narrative clarity, their nature as universal connoisseurs, allowed them to discover the narrative conventions of a Western — complete with a satisfying massacre of Indians at the end. The spectator/connoisseur compares the scenes less with his private life than with other scenes watched in other movies. He compares the actor of this film with other performances: when the sheriff appears, Napoleon or Mark Antony are superimposed. He can't keep his mind from fleeing to other films — other countries — which, like the infinite worlds of the universe imagined by Auguste Blanqui, are almost identical incarnations, as though cast in the same matrix. Those tiny, inevitable breakaways configure a different type of photographic or cinematographic unconscious, produced no longer by a lack of control over the images, but by an excess of control.

I must excuse myself for having decided to begin this examination of the photographic unconscious with one of its most complex manifestations, cinematographic narrative. Perhaps I should have begun with clearer, more evident forms such as an amateur photograph: what Moholy-Nagy calls a "dust-cloud of inert signs." But the apparently complex case of today's film industry is really much simpler, because the control of the cinematic signs is more assured. It is well known that behind every element for consumption in the film industry, there is a ten-person committee weighing the pros and cons of each piece produced, according to criteria borrowed from marketing laws as well as from Aristotle, Cicero, Zen Buddhism, the Bauhaus, hypnotism, and the post-Tridentine Christian religions — not to mention dietetics.

Let's now try to play with an extreme idea: let's imagine a virtual film stimulated in each spectator by visual and tactile signs. The stimulus will be abstract, and that will make it easier to touch off the scenes. What I call an "abstract stimulus" is a set of nonfigurative audiovisual tests forcing the brain to complete the images and sounds. Every particular brain processes stimuli in a slightly different way. And the set of stimuli is conceived in order to enhance those particularities. Let's imagine that in the process of fabricating images, the spectator searches for images lived or seen in

other films, just as in the process of dreaming. We can bet that each particular film will be different, but not very different from the one common to all. And not only because everybody shares in the same stock of films and the same way of life, but also because those films will come from a "corpus of visual opinions." Visual opinions are the automatic sequences of images touched off by the first arbitrary image created on the basis of the abstract stimulus. Some examples of visual opinions: when we go into an unknown house, we see the living room, and on that basis, along with our impressions of the external aspect of the house, we develop an opinion about the rest. That enormous quantity of bets we make when we go down a path thinking about everything but the path, when we go up a staircase thinking about everything but the stairs, those bets, blending drives and timorous appetites, can make up autonomous dramatic sets, separated by moments of "tuning out" or bouts of amnesia. Such scenes create another kind of photographic unconscious.

Let us now imagine a spectator unable to follow a film's story line, someone who could only follow the involuntary forms that have managed to creep into the film, that is, its mistakes. This spectator, a kind of experimental delinquent, follows a film composed of obsessional details. Let me serve as my own example. For years I watched so-called Greco-Latin films (toga flicks, with early Christians devoured by lions, emperors in love, and so on). My only interest in those films was to catch sight of planes and helicopters in the background, to discover the eternal DC6 crossing the sky during Ben Hur's final race, Cleopatra's naval battle, or the *Quo Vadis* banquets. That was my particular fetish, my only interest. For me all those films, the innumerable tales of Greco-Latinity, all partook of the single story of a DC6 flying discreetly from one film to the next.

Let us now return to the photograph of the provincial square. For various reasons we have decided to blow up the picture to ten times its original size. And now, looking at the blown-up photo, we discover new figures that we hadn't seen in the original picture. Some of them are partially concealed among the bushes, seen among the trees, or looking at us from the cathedral's parapets, and every one of them is armed with a gun. Going back to the original picture

we then see the armed groups that had escaped our attention. The man without a shoe is in fact seriously wounded. We know it now, because we see a little pool of blood that we had ignored in the first look at the original. The first time we had perceived the bucolic aspects of the picture, but now we see only threatening elements. For instance, the man looking calmly at the camera, hands in his pockets, is really just about to take out a weapon, and if all the passers-by are looking at the same point off camera, it is without a doubt because they are fascinated by some violent event occurring there. And that eagle flying above is in fact a military plane. Those clouds are explosions. And those black spots, like ants in the distance, are fighters in a battle. Instead of a provincial town during afternoon siesta, we are witnessing an episode of a civil war. We are seeing two superimposed photographs composed of the same signs; but once we have seen the violent elements, our reading functions unidirectionally. We are now unable to see the bucolic image, no doubt because the peaceful elements cannot threaten the tokens of war.

In reality, though, the original picture was a still, from a film whose theme we do not know. We rush to see the film. When we get to the sequence in question, the moving image first shows us a provincial square vanishing into the scene of a battle somewhere else, in a use of the dissolve technique. The still that gave us the original picture contained both images, the provincial square and the battle, though the provincial square was slightly dominant. We think we have solved the enigma. The image of peace did not conceal a violent scene, and nor was it an allegorical representation of that scene. In reality, that picture was two superimposed pictures. Calmer now, we keep watching the film. The fighters run in every direction, but there is something awkward in their behavior. They move speedily, but as if they were trying to avoid invisible objects. Some protect themselves behind invisible walls or trees. During the battle the fighters behave as though they were fighting in the provincial square of the previous sequence. Little by little the implied or tacit provincial square makes its presence felt. The sequence has several camera angles and movements, but they make all the more palpable the presence of invisible trees and of a cathedral disappearing into thin air. The square is acting as a threatening presence, as a particular kind of cinematographic unconscious,

sketched out by the evocative or invocatory pantomime of the fighters. The square becomes a thousand times more mysterious and more terrible than the battle itself, with its inevitable casualties and its bureaucratic uproar.

Let us again take the same picture and blow it up to ten thousand times its original size. With surprise we notice that like a hologram, the picture is made of many pictures identical to the first one we had seen. The central square is a giant set of particles, each one of them representing the central square. We then take one of those particles and enlarge it to the size of the original picture, and then we enlarge it up ten times again. We notice that this time there are no hidden men behind the trees, there are no pools of blood or helicopters; the picture is apparently the same as the first, but it is lacking in accidents, it doesn't have an unconscious. Then we examine other particles, we enlarge them too: there are no traces of armed men anywhere. We devote a long portion of our lives to examining the photographic particles one by one. After some time it becomes obvious that a certain number of particles tend toward battle, while other particles tend toward peace. A few years later we discover groups of particles where there are no signs of the provincial square; you can only see the battle in them. How can we not conclude that this image contains two sets, each of which works as the other's unconscious? But what would happen if in the original picture, instead of two possible sets, we had an n -number of sets, each coupled with its particular opposite? We would then have an image composed of sets of image particles and of what we might call "anti-image" particles. What would happen if the moving image were nothing but a continuous circulation of images and anti-images, like couples in a permanent state of divorce and reconciliation? Couldn't the reverberation provoked by this constant renovation of image/anti-image configurations be called "aura"? Why not conclude that aura and the cinematographic unconscious are one and the same?

After such a heresy, I would like to briefly comment on a few ideas of Abdel Kader (1808-1883), and to bring up a theme that directly concerns the corpus of involuntary signs in every photograph: the veiled vision of divinity. Vision, veil: two themes

that Islamic thinkers have often linked together. In his *Kitab al Mawakif* — the book of halts, suspensions, and sudden stops — Emir Abdel Kader declares: "Among the most important examples revealing divine epiphanies we must point to polished bodies, among them mirrors, and among those bodies, that solar machine which is called the photographic machine, invented in our epoch." Abdel Kader mentions the remarkable object called "photograph" in order to develop, like Ibn Arabi, a kind of allegory of a neo-Platonic system of the world. "A great king must become known to his subjects, but he cannot go up and down his realm, house by house, nor even less can he open his intimate dwelling to everyone; all that is forbidden to him. Thus he decides to have his picture taken and make multiple copies. We'll call the picture of the veiled king 'the original distinction of Muslim reality,' the Reality of Realities, Absolute Unity, Primary Matter of the All, etc. As for the initial negative before it is developed, we'll call it the Original Intellect, the first Spiritual Form flowing forth from Being, its highest Kalam, the Universal Soul. The reproduction of that negative will constitute the genders and species spreading across the world. The paper used for the copies must be considered the Immutable Essence (the Greek *hyle*), the Availability of the Possible."

Reading this text, I let myself drift into a reflexive bit of reverie. Look once again at the picture of the King. If in truth his features are here, his reality is nonetheless hidden from the shadows projected upon him; and we are among these shadows. I will insist on this last notion, in a somewhat oblique reading of Abdel Kader. If we decide that in one picture the shadows are the world, then they are more real than their support, that is, than the illuminated bodies. When the bodies move, the shadows change places to follow them, for the shadows are tied to these bodies. Let's call these shadows "the real world," and the bodies that imprison them "simulacra in the hermetic world" — that is, invisible figures floating in the air, representing absent presences without relation to the real world, or quite literally, cinema. If we use a film with very high contrasts, for example optic sound film, we will be able to see scenes where the boundaries between light and shadow will be difficult to grasp. Shadows will be more eloquent than the illuminated objects, so that these objects lose their contours and become shadows of shadows.

An illuminated hand will vanish into the light of a blinding window, while the more real shadows will form a single protean body. When we speak about the unconscious we always imagine a world of shadows from which desired monsters seek to emerge. In the example just described, it is unconscious light that seeks to erupt among the waking shadows of the real world, thus unveiling its protean nature.

Often, at the end of a movie, filmmakers feel the need for some takes of the sky, a landscape, empty streets, and so on. There is no movement in those shots, and the directors could simply film still photographs. But the eye discovers this immediately, because even if there is no movement (in either the subject or the camera) the presence of movement always appears in any filmed image. This play of mobility and fixity is a dwelling-place of involuntary signs. They sketch out another field for the photographic unconscious, one I would also like to illustrate. Let's imagine a film sequence done in such a way that movements recurrently return to fixity. It is not a frozen image, but a kind of fixity or immobility rendered present to itself through an image in movement. We could say that this fixity is the sum of all motions. It is not apparent to sight, but it makes itself known from within the very mesh of movement. I remember an image from my native land, Chiloé. In front of my house, wind would move the trees. At a certain point, the wind would blow with such regularity that one had the impression the trees were frozen in place, bent over in the same direction. The fishermen moving through the scene stopped short themselves, but in a posture opposite that of the trees. Complemented by the extravagant positions of the fishermen and the trees, that moment of immobility gave the impression that movement and its opposite were not contradictory. When the wind recovered its irregular rhythms, the immobile image vanished in homage to movement, and everything became normal again. But it always could happen that the wind would blow constantly and the landscape would return to immobility, only to spring back into motion some few seconds later. This oscillation gradually gave a new feeling to the scene: when everything moved about one saw only immobility, and vice-versa. I told myself this was a good way to photograph wind.

Another memory: in Canton province not far from Guilin, I was out on a boat with some friends. We had just had lunch, and we were lazy and intermittently napping, when somebody woke us up saying: "Look, look, there is a Taoist monk over there." I looked, and I saw an immobile monk on the banks of the river, in the position of somebody getting ready to take a big leap. He was so immobile that I had the impression that everything so apparently immobile, like the stones, the hills, the clouds in the sky, was teeming with movement — everything but the monk. Immobility called for movement, movement engendered immobility. Behind every immobile thing movement lurked. I said to myself: "These things were falsely immobile. Immobility conceals movement" — it is the unconscious of movement.

Back home, it is seven o'clock in the evening. We turn on the TV and there is an interview with a survivor of some accident who has spent many hours in a state of coma. At the moment we reach the interview, the survivor is saying that he has seen himself from the outside and from above, and then he says that he flew above himself. We understand that the survivor has achieved a better-than-everyday visualization of the virtual perspectives, of that visual sphere with which one protects himself at all times — a form of cinematographic unconscious that I would like to call the Guardian Angel. When we live in everyday life we see a certain number of images and we compose other complementary images along a number of axes. Every film incorporates that teeming vision. Every edited sequence has a multiplicity of possible angles, which are merely suggested and which usually serve as a counterpoint to the sequence we are actually viewing. But in our lives these possible montages are uncontrollable — because they are necessarily different for every spectator. They form a type of photographic unconscious already mentioned here, which we could call "potential montage."

Indeed, I have used the phrase "photographic unconscious" to name the ghosts which hover around mechanically reproduced images and sounds, yet do not actually touch the audiovisual object. Sometimes they surround it, they transfigure it, they literally kidnap it, and can even transform it into a story. But the stories we are used

to hearing since the beginning of the world are events that occur to animated beings, preferably human beings or animals, occasionally plants or stones. The unsettling thing about these stories is that, being written with words, they incite the listener to illustrate them, to imagine them utilizing images composed from lived experiences (Emma Bovary, imagined by somebody who has only had contact with things Chinese, will inevitably take on Chinese features). However, this virtual illustration of facts was perturbed by the mechanical arts. The film adaptation of *Madame Bovary* shows an actress who must play a specific Madame Bovary, conferring upon her a physiognomy that she cannot change. Her physique was no longer uncertain: the most we could do was imagine another Madame Bovary, embodied by a better actress. For years I have wondered about that strange process called the embodiment of stories (or pre-embodiment, in the case of reading). Since in the end it comes down to a theme that theologians have had to fight and negotiate with over many centuries, I have chosen to make use of a number of theological terms that can be useful in the explanation of the most extreme case of the incarnation of an abstraction: God becoming human through Christ.

Without focusing too much on the theological problem, let us remember that in the Catholic religion, God becomes man without ceasing to be God, nor abandoning his throne to a successor during his stay on earth. There is no successor to the King of Heaven. We can see the difficulty of this situation, since if he is God and yet at the same time a man, he cannot keep his full powers here below. For in the contrary case he would be merely a mage, a magician, or a semi-God: all hateful beings for the good Catholic. And by the way, what kind of errors does he allow himself to commit: can he stumble, can he have caprices, is his excrement of the same kind as ours? (The solution is found in the works of the Pseudo-Areopagite: Christ performs mixed or theanthropic actions.) Let us look at this problem from the point of view of political theology. Let's take an official photograph of a head of state. We find out that he is the King of the World. As a thaumaturgic Magi-King — let's just suppose he is a Capetian — his word is law, he cannot be wrong. He can neither die nor lie. We look at the photo once again. Nothing in the photo belies his powers. We

know that he has recently suffered from kidney stones and that he does not tell the whole truth when he calls himself the King of the World, because that world excludes some continents such as Asia, Africa, Europe, and a good two thirds of America. His eternity is relative, he was only crowned a week ago. It is rumored that he is suffering from an incurable cancer to the throat, and a few weeks ago he called a group of Afghan delegates "Bolivians." We look at the photo once again. Now we see that small, imperceptible, marginal, and laughable signs, even more terrible for this reason, are hiding behind the image of the head of state. Let's take another look at that newsreel showing the King of the World stepping up to inaugurate an Arch of Triumph. We see a man of one meter, sixty-three centimeters, limping slightly and surrounded by a majestic cloud of flies. We recognize the tyrant in his shy smile. That smile is not the least of the hidden signs. We slowly discover them all over, the distinctive signs of power half hidden like the skulls in the paintings of the Vanities. The pedestrians who look around in all directions are his body guards. That confused crowd of soldiers half asleep in the shade of the palm trees are his troops. The small walking stick that helps him to walk is the symbol of absolute power. A blend of allegorical signs and scarcely perceived accidents forms a corpus of official signs which tells us: "Behind this little uninteresting man is hidden the eternity of power, the Law, omniscience and omnipresence."

Let us consider another head of state, or rather his representation in this world, King Richard III in Shakespeare's play. In reality we see an actor, the prisoner of a ghost and of a story. The ghost tries to possess him and make him relive his eternal tale. I will hazard an extrapolation: the actor is a kind of camera, his body and voice are filming abstract events. In that film — which is nothing other than the moving and talking body of the actor — there are certain nights when the photography and sound are so perfect that they make us forget the original Richard III and his soaring tragedy. A Catholic would have no difficulty in recognizing this excess of zeal as the Nestorian heresy. On other occasions, the photography is so willfully imperfect that the actor seems to be only the visible tip of the iceberg. The elements of the acting become coldly emphatic, but they refer to the hidden mass of ice. The actor-film has no

concrete existence, he is only the paper on which are described the various events that happen in this hidden region. On these days he falls into the Gnostic heresy. At other times, when it could be said that there is a double image, we see the actor-film representing Richard III, but we feel he is not alone on the stage. The phantom of Richard III is no longer within him, but by his side. Every time the actor Richard III does not know what to do, he consults the phantom (and the phantasm) of Richard III. Between the drama and the actor there is a mediator who, without knowing it, is guilty of Monophysite neo-theanthropism, of Severian observance. But in all these incarnations of an abstraction — God, power, universal history — exactly who plays the role of consciousness, and who the unconscious? Is it not clear that Christ, the head of state, and the actor are three types of abstract photography, and that to the extent that these photographs bring the abstractions into view, they render the contours of the support structure visible in their proliferation — as though a swarm of tiny concretions (themselves the microfilms of micro-abstractions) had all begun colliding? These accidents, these extremes of photography, the corpuscular incarnations of abstraction, can be called “the photographic unconscious.”

I would now like to discuss the puzzle image. Take a group of figures and elements from a set. Arrange them in space, and disperse them so they are out of each other's sight. By means of a calculated play of mirrors, concentrate all of them in one image so that they appear to stand side by side. The play of mirrors — of which Athanasius Kircher's mirror-theater remains one of the simplest examples — permits us to examine an image where a group of figures seem to pose alongside each other, though we still feel that something indiscernible lies between them. Let us suppose that they represent a scene of the Holy Family. We are filming live models, who are posing and trying to be immobile. The models grow tired and slowly lose their pose. Nothing unsettling up to this point, until one of the figures, let's say Saint Joseph, extends his hand toward the Virgin, whom as we see is but a few centimeters distant from him. Nevertheless we observe that Saint Joseph's hand disappears into thin air before touching the body of the Virgin. Meanwhile, the Christ child has begun playing, and his head appears and disappears in the air. We see only the backside of a cow curiously combined

with the front end of an ass, both composing the form of an unidentifiable beast. When a waiter comes on stage with a tray of coffee cups, we see him appear and disappear in different parts of the picture. Finally, the models grow tired of posing and leave: each one disappears with a single step, forward or backward, though we know they have not actually left the set. No doubt the moment of astonishment, of fascination, is very fragile. It comes at the outset of the series of incidents I have described, when we suddenly realize that the group of figures that we see side by side are in fact dispersed in a space far more vast, and in a much different order. At that point we sense that the family portrait is fractured by an abyss between one element and the next, between one figure and its apparent neighbor. Such a space constitutes another kind of photographic unconscious.

Today we are accustomed to seeing this type of image on television. Someone in London tells us about the recent bombings in Egypt, and the image on the screen shows the journalist face to face with a person whom we know to be in the same city as ourselves. Two men argue in a short reverse shot in a film by Alain Tanner, acting as if they were three feet apart; but any Swiss would realize that these characters are actually at either end of the country. In *Othello* by Orson Welles, one character slaps and another: the beginning of the slap was filmed in Venice, the final part in Morocco a few months later. Abel Gance films a reverse shot thirty years after the initial one, and the actor whose face we have seen can be doubled from behind by his own son. Continuity and dispersion: two constant principles in cinematography. We see the images as if they were a continuum, knowing that each take is worlds apart. It is a feeling bordering on fear, accentuated by the passage of time. For those of us who attempt to remain conscious of the substance behind the cinematographic image this culminates in a sensation of abyss, of multiple chasms that fissure the image at any given moment, lending the impression that we are living realistic events which nonetheless are hard to believe. This is a radical feeling, insofar as it makes us suspect that the cinematographic unconscious could be photography itself: as though to look at it were to see all and nothing at once. It is a contagious sentiment, shared by those who have witnessed an apparition of the Virgin, of Asklepios, of Isis

Multimamia. Or — and this, far more frequent, is far more strange — by those who have lost a salt shaker standing plainly before their eyes, but rendered invisible by their loss of faith in its presence. I think the best definition of this feeling is given by what is called “Moore’s paradox”: it is raining but I don’t believe it.

My presentation was originally going to end at this point. But two nights ago, I half-dreamed a theoretical fiction that allegorically treats the theme of an audiovisual unconscious. Let’s imagine the following scene: we are watching the television, jumping from channel to channel in search of something entertaining. At first we act mechanically, but we will become increasingly compulsive as we discover that all the channels somehow communicate with one another. We repeat the zapping operation, slowly, examining the image rather than guessing the show’s theme from one or two scenes. Then we discover that there is a small grey man sitting behind one of the political commentators on Channel 12, like a bodyguard. On Channel 13 we see the same character asking a doorman what time it is; on Channel 14, filming a Minister on an official visit in Melanesia; two channels later he is dodging an attempted assassination. But on Channel 4 they are showing an old historical movie, and the little man is dressed as a crusader, and in another as an Indian, and in another he listens to the explanations of a botanist. We follow him frantically from channel to channel. At first he always escapes us but in the end we arrive before he does. When he enters the frame we are already waiting for him. Upon seeing us he escapes into the background; but we are on channel 1, we know that there are twenty channels, and it is easy to suppose they form a ring. We go to channel 10, and we see him arriving from the background. The little man is weary of his flight. He sits down to rest, and stares at us. Disconcerted, we change channels, but wherever we go that little man is awaiting us, always smiling sadly, as though reproaching us for something unknown. We change channels and we find him again, more and more confident. He makes faces at us, hurls obscene gestures as well, now it is he who pursues us. We turn off the television. We go toward the bathroom, because it now time to return to the real world and we have to shave. In the bathroom mirror we discover the little man looking at us with surprise. The little man is our own image. But I am six feet tall, and

he is only five feet nine inches. And I am not blond and he is. How can I know he is myself?

The problem perplexes us for a number of weeks. Then, slowly, an image-idea — an idea-act — begins to take form, bristling with uncanniness. The little man is our audiovisual double. Before, in earlier days, we were spectators of animate images that told stories; then, with the passage of time, we learned to identify with the protagonist; and when the hour of rebellion arrived, we preferred to identify with the adversary. Now in our autumn years, we can no longer identify at all, and this is why we have had to invent this double, as a stand-in or a substitute. He is our man in the films, the documentaries, the news flashes. He tells us “I’m here, all is well.” But for some time he has been watching us. Thus *we* are also the spectacle. We are the little man’s little man. In fact, the little man is our contact agent with the Other Side. He communicates our movements and opinions to the other audiovisual figures, across the screen. In my multipersonal world, I and my “I”s have a whole community of interests. The audiovisual unconscious — the totality of potential audiovisual facts — communicates with us through this anodyne character, this double agent with whom nobody had bothered until today. Now that he has been discovered, he has fled from the Other Side and found refuge among us. For the moment we have lost all contact with the audiovisual world. At the beginning we were barely a dozen “I”s, and we communicated with the TV by the go-between of a shy old spinster, who, when she felt herself discovered, came here to live with us. Then we relied on the melancholy basketball player, the Chinese chauffeur, the joking assassin. Now all of them are living in exile in me. Tomorrow it will be necessary to watch TV for a new representative, but he will inevitably be discovered and come to live among us. But up to what point will we accept refugees? My brain is a small country. A few months from now we will be forced to refuse all further requests for asylum. In this Republic which I am, the reasons of state demand it.

CHAPTER V

For a Shamanic Cinema

Like America, cinema was discovered several times: a caveman's hand pressed against a lightly colored surface, then dusted all around with a puff of bright red powder, the very first mechanical reproduction of an image; simulators (half-transparent demons of the air, described by Hermes Trimegistus); shadows, pre- and post-Platonic; the Golem; the mirror theater of Athanasius Kircher; Highland fog which reproduces larger-than-life images of passers-by (evoked by James Hoog in the *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*); the sky above the port of Punto Arenas in Chile, which reflects reversed images of the city a half-century ago; Robertson's Fantoscope; the magic butterflies at Coney Island. All prefigure the movies. At the beginning of the century these inventions converged in cinema, which immediately disintegrated into industry. Like America, again, cinema developed simultaneously in two directions: as industry and utopia.

Cinema in its industrial form is a predator. It is a machine for copying the visible world and a book for people who can't read. A tradition begun by the Stoics, and prolonged by Leo the Hebrew, Ibn Toufail, and Calderón de la Barca, describes the visible world as the book of God. This book teaches us a science no other books can teach. And no other book is better written: to read it you need only a pure heart and an empty head: a kind of *docta ignorantia*. Cinema is an ideal stronghold for anti-cultural arguments. What previous training, what cultural background do you need to

understand a film? These will always be no more than obstacles. Which reminds me of the arguments proffered by the defenders of illiteracy in the Spanish Golden Age, like Philip the Second who created a Council of Illiterates (ostensibly to benefit from the advice of innocents, though in fact to make sure there were no Jews involved). Or the character in *Loyalty Over Envy* by the playwright Tirso de Molina, who declares that illiteracy is proof of natural nobility. If the book of the world teaches us all that we need to learn, how can it help but render all other books superfluous? Cinema, which is nothing but a photocopy of the book of the world, renders not just other books but perhaps all other art unnecessary.

On the other hand, the utopians saw cinema as an entirely new art, or at least a unique discipline requiring new theories, new conventions, new instruments to rethink the visible world. The relationship between the utopians and industry has grown increasingly complex. Today it is hard to know whether the recent hyper-industrialization of cinema helps utopia by providing cheap hardware, or if utopian objects (which industry calls prototypes) actually further this hyper-industrialization. Several years ago I had an idea for a film: a competition between Georges Méliès and the Lumière Brothers to produce a movie of *Around the World in 80 Days*, for screening at the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris. Because the promoters can't decide which project to back, they go directly to Jules Verne and ask his opinion. Verne supports both projects, so Méliès and the Lumières each have eighty days to make a film. The Lumières decide to spend eighty days traveling around the world with their camera, whereas Méliès chooses to remain in Paris and use special effects to recreate the trip in his studio. I believe this apocryphal story sums up all the problems I'll be dealing with in this chapter. At the very least it illustrates the difference between naturalism and artifice, between a craft approach and an industrial approach, which people in another age would have expressed as the difference between science and witchcraft (in Spanish, to capture a person's soul by witchcraft is called *hechizo* — meaning either "artificial event" or "sorcery").

The history of cinema could be interpreted as the ongoing accumulation and constant (or periodic) confrontation of these two

tendencies. But there is a third element which makes matters more complicated. Artists and intellectuals appeared on the battlefield; artists looking to further their disciplines or to build a new total art, and intellectuals in search of fresh instruments of reflection. The entrance of artists and intellectuals into cinema provoked the birth of what is called the first *avant-garde*: Delluc, Cocteau, and Cavalcanti, but also Murnau, Flaherty, and Joris Ivens. On my shelves, they sit in two categories. On the one hand, what I call the "filiationists," who tried to follow the threads of cinema back to its origins and to explain it in terms of existing disciplines: Chinese ideograms for Eisenstein, Western syntax for Béla Balázs (who thought camera movements were verbs, camera angles were adjectives, and characters were nouns), Pavlovian physiology for Kulechov. The other category I call "apparitionists," with an allusion to Caro Bajora's notion that carnivals can either be explained by their links to tradition or by their sudden appearance from nowhere; these filmmakers, including Buñuel, Vigo, and Vertov, could just as well be called magicians. They privileged experimentation, exploration, alchemical powers, and vertigo (La Mettrie would have called them "the dark ones"). I like to think that if Ernst Meier had been a film critic he would have classed the first group as phylogenetic and the second as ontogenetic: the first considering cinema as a product of the evolution of the fine arts, and the second as an original and unexpected phenomenon. And it is true that even though cinema was prefigured and announced in advance, its appearance still had the effect of an explosion. It was more a terrorist act than a consequence of the crisis in the plastic arts. The first *avant-garde* did not last long, and was confined socially and geographically to France, or at least to Europe. It involved not more than two thousand people. Later, other *avant-gardes* came to the fore, but always fleetingly, for they were always absorbed into the industrial mass. In fact, the history of cinema can be seen as a series of tiny revolutions decapitated by industry, not just in America but in Europe too; and paradoxically, the French, English, and Italian industries have been far more radical in their hostility to experimentation than the Americans.

Avant-garde cinema never found an audience and, curiously, it came under fire from European intellectuals and artists who saw more innovation in a film by Buster Keaton than in Fernand Léger's

Ballet Mécanique or René Clair's *Entr'acte*. On the whole, the refusal to admit experimentation was justified by an ambition to make "great popular culture," resurrecting the hope that a maximum number of people could be reached without simplifying the means of expression. These were the years of program music (Blienzstein, Copeland, Kabalevsky), political theater (Piscator, Meyerhold), and the Bauhaus, a time when experimentation was trying to become the R&D section of industry. So cinema came back to the fold of industry and stayed there till the mid-fifties. In the U.S. at that time, but also in Europe, Latin America, and Japan, small production units appeared that attempted a radical change in way films were made. The birth of counter-culture ideologies, coupled with new technology like smaller cameras, direct sound, and more sensitive film, made this change imaginable. The closure of big studios, and the emergence of TV completed a transformation that left the audiovisual landscape almost unrecognizable. The avant-garde was back. Film once again lent itself to experimentation. Production methods were revolutionized. But this time there was an audience, critics, and a working distribution system. For about fifteen years avant-garde cinema held center stage. But soon advertising made the avant-garde seem almost banal. Commercial cinema copied the nonchalance of experimental films, if not the desire to shock. Meanwhile political rhetoric found its way into the avant-garde, forcing a stand-off between people who believed in a new popular culture and those who plunged head-first into exaggerated experimentation. Very soon the years of heady excess and exuberant arbitrariness give way to a period of normalization by industry, except this time around, measures were taken to ensure that re-industrialization would be irreversible. The tactics were these: a catastrophic increase in production costs; a rigid division between the various film crafts; and rigorous control of production standards in the areas of script-writing, duration, casting, and use of color. In other words, the notion of standards and the notion of excellence were deliberately confused. In Europe, the establishment of government funding institutions, often providing one hundred percent financing for films on the condition that state-established standards were met, has served the same function. In other words, the priorities became political and not at all artistic.

I realize of course that this short history of cinema will seem oversimplified even to those of you who agree with my analysis. The term "avant-garde" is obviously too crude: various avant-gardes have always survived, but they have been infected by morality, they have been neutralized, they are, in short, dull. Nevertheless, I believe that my analysis remains correct if the terms "industrial" and "avant-garde," or "commercial" and "artistic," are replaced by the notion of assembly-line production and craft work. My point of view is not impartial. I am interested in films which, wherever they occur, are in some sense unique. Handmade, homemade, craftsmanlike. The ambiguity at the heart of the problem is so weighty as to be unmanageable. Does craftsmanlike mean cheap? Obviously not. Craft, or *métier*, is at the center of French industrial cinema. The most important film school in France is called the European Foundation for Image and Sound Crafts, and its purpose is to break down the craft of filmmaking into isolated component parts. Naturally, each craft is given its own independence and its rules of interdependence. The whole system is governed by a rigid system of production standards. The logic is not very different from that which still rules over the guild called the Comrades of Duty (which sounds as strange in French as it does in English): these are the modern-day successors of the men who built the great cathedrals. Films have more than once been compared to cathedrals. In this system, every single component of a perfect work must in itself be perfect. The components are the product of craftsmanship all right, but the whole is industrial — though it is an industry governed not by commercial concerns, but by political ones.

I see an alternative to both these types of cinema. It has some elements of the old-fashioned crafts, for instance, a hands-on approach to celluloid or video, and a spirit of inventiveness. But the main principle has nothing to do with craftsmanship, because the purpose is to make poetic objects. The rules you need to understand these poetic objects are unique to each film and must be rediscovered by every viewer; they can not be described *a priori*, nor *a posteriori* for that matter. In short, these are films that cannot respond to the question, "What is this movie about?" The great French film critic Serge Daney used to distinguish such one-of-a-kind films from the slave products of industry by invoking the

difference between true travel and a package tour. In true travel, what matters are the magical accidents, the discoveries, the inexplicable wonders and the wasted time. In a package tour, the pleasure comes from sadistic adherence to a program.

But if cinema is the art of mixing up and combining discontinuous lengths of image, how can we rebel against industrial standards without producing monsters? Maybe one-of-a-kind films *are* monsters, except that I find their monstrosities much closer to our lives than the normative narratives of industry. But let's consider an extreme case of filming, at the antipodes of conventional cinema. Let's try to film a summed-up version of a man's weekly routine, without necessarily looking for the most dramatic moments. We'll construct a montage sequence of a group of people's entries and exits from his house; or of all the moments these people drink a glass of milk; even of all the times they sneeze. We can use this catalogue to construct various series: the milk series, the sneeze series, the exit series. We can also build other series with other rules of seriality. For instance, using as a recurrent element the glass of milk, or the exit. Then we will relate all these series by some analogy (any kind of analogy). Let us call each series a little monster. Naturally, all these little monsters share some common traits, because they all stem from the same original catalogue; but they belong to different continua, with variable durations — even if, objectively speaking, they all last the same time. The juxtaposition of little monsters constructs a large monster and the relationship between the various parts of the large monster is indiscernible. Nonetheless, the memory of the entire week will be sparked by the view of all or a part of the film — not the memory of the actual week during which the events were recorded, no, just a week, whatever week, but a concrete one. A week which has never been experienced but still proves perfectly real.

This exercise — familiar to the so-called structuralist filmmakers of the seventies — is an example of what can be called shamanic activity in cinema, because although the sequence is taken arbitrarily from life, it does not retrace a particular person's life, nor does it symbolize or summarize an average week. In a certain sense this ritual sequence leads us on a journey to the beyond, to a region

inhabited by the ghosts of lost time. But are we sure that the choice of segments of life in these series is really arbitrary? In *ars combinatoria* nothing is truly arbitrary, for the combinations inevitably produce meaning. In this particular case I should like to suggest a criterion of selection borrowed from a well-known controversy among nineteenth-century biologists. The *Querelle des Analogues* opposed Cuvier and Saint-Hilaire. Cuvier wanted to classify animals in four completely separate families, as if nature really had four completely independent systems; Saint-Hilaire, on the other hand, believed in a global organic scheme, under which animals develop similar characteristics even if they do not belong to the same species. For instance, individuals may develop nails or claws despite their specific differences (birds, man, amphibia).

Let's get back to our monsters. We'll attempt to show them in two ways, assembling sequences based on formal characteristics (Cuvier) and common activities (Saint-Hilaire). In the first case, we obtain different morphologies of the same week, and in the second, the physiology of the scattered events that make up the week. While the first may serve us as clues to help remember and reconstitute the "film of the week's events," the second will restore the emotion of particular instants. These two types of life-fragments are similar because they have the power to evoke or conjure up other moments behind the images we actually see. Now, such moments of life have not really been lived by any person in particular but a little bit by everyone, so as to create a kind of family experience. And this is where the problem arises. The idea is not to establish some kind of intersubjective relation between us, but rather with the beyond. But what is the beyond? Let's put ourselves in the audience's shoes. Everyone associates bits of memory, so that incidents which did not actually happen in succession are juxtaposed in our memory. We all possess a huge number of potential film sequences that coexist in a compact space and time. These sequences are interchangeable and superimposed one on the other. All these films are sleeping within us. An ordinary narrative movie provides a vast environment in which these potential film sequences disperse and vanish. A shamanic film, on the other hand, would be more like a land mine: it explodes among these potential films and sometimes provokes chain reactions, allowing other events to come into being. In the same way,

the shamanic sequence makes us believe we remember events which we have not experienced; and it puts these fabricated memories in touch with genuine memories which we never thought to see again, and which now rise up and march towards us like the living dead in a horror movie. This mechanism is the first step in a process which could permit us to pass from our own world into the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, even to the stars, before returning to humanity again. All of this, of course, is but a short summary of a poetic system, but it should be enough to help us to find a way of filming a million miles away from conventional narrative cinema.

Élémire Zolla conceived alchemy as an extension of charity to the animal, vegetable, and mineral reigns. For our purposes, charity will mean simply according our attention, or love, to all that is or can be closest to us in the frame. An attention at least equal to that given to the characters in the story we are being told. The extension of this concept is to make us forget that what is closest to us in an image must always be a human being. For instance, take a painting by Tung Yuan, called *A Peasant Village Welcomes The Dragon*. The dragon, in this context, means the Emperor. At first sight, all we see is a mountain landscape. If we look more closely we discover a few white dots, not in the center of the frame but towards the bottom left corner, and a little higher up, even farther to the left and almost at the edge of frame, more white dots, even smaller than the first group. These tiny white dots — these ants — are a crowd of peasants coming to meet the Emperor and his entourage. Commentators respectfully point out that in this picture, all of nature seems to await the Emperor. Yet our gaze wanders, almost vaguely, as if gliding over the figures, only to lose itself in the emptiness beyond the mountains, irresistibly drawn towards nothingness. Many Chinese paintings communicate this pious indifference towards the human form and trembling respect for the landscape which contains it. Ansel Adams' photographs give us a similar feeling. Except that in his case, we know there is a human behind the camera. This human presence gives us vertigo, such that we run back and forth between the person and the view until eventually the landscape is peopled with ghosts and specters — which are only virtual echoes of the man behind the camera, echoes fading into nature.

In 1925, the poet Saint-Paul-Roux predicted: "First, 1: the images will be contained within the frame of an interior space, theater or temple; then, 2: they will individualize, one by one... or in groups of works which can be evoked by callers, by you and I in possession of an evocation device; then these images will come at our call, the Chaplains and Pickfords of the day, and we will receive them anywhere, in the living-room or in the woods or on the terrace. Each one of us, solitary or not, will be able to receive the Images at home, tonight we will have Cleopatra, Danton, or Madame Du Barry, and these shadows, alone or in numbers, will people our homes and vanish at a click... Animated images generated by electric current or by the sun, as if we took from the sun itself... In short, an animistic synthesis." On July 4, 1896, Maxim Gorky announced: "Last night I visited the kingdom of shadows. A silent place, with ashen leaves trembling in the wind, and gray human forms condemned to perpetual silence. A gray world, a silent world, a deathly world." We speak of nothing other: a call to our ancestors, who come wrapped in an invisible film; traveling through the beyond, whether our own that of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms; return trip through unexplored pathways. Such is the art of the shaman filmmaker.

Michel Butor pointed out an episode in Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* in which the astonished protagonists discover an undersea copy of their cities, carved in stone by the action of the waves: New York, Paris, Moscow. Twentieth-century cities dreamed by Nature, there at the bottom of the ocean. Polar explorers echoed Jules Verne; they too saw tropical forests and indescribable monsters, carved by the wind for their adoration in mountains whiter than white. And the summer clouds that sketch pitiless caricatures of our political leaders? And the rabbit in the moon? A thousand paths, a thousand short-cuts and secret passages from one world to the next, still awaiting their discovery. Close-up departure, voyage round the world, and return to the same close-up. But please, do not see these remarks as an apology of pure, clear, vegetarian films, or even worse, as healthy films: films showing nothing but landscapes, chemical reactions, animals bored to death at nightfall. And do not believe I am advocating the abandonment of narrative. If I'm saying that we need to beware the industry and its

slightly too-perfect attempt to produce the innocence of its audiences, it is because of the risks that such innocence holds. For it is the innocence of lambs, and at the end of the road there is often a banal slaughter, which is too stupid a way to reach the beyond.

Perhaps the best way to conceive of films that go beyond the limited and all-too human is to quote from my own work in progress. In all these projects I seek to move from one world into another, using a technique described in baroque Venice as "Il Ponte," a way of producing anamorphic agents that play with the four levels of medieval rhetoric: literal, allegorical, ethical, and anagogical. But there are also other rhetorical systems like the seven paths of Aboulafia, or such simple things as crossword puzzles. Except that instead of seeking to read all four levels at the same time, the aim is to skip constantly from one level to another. The jump is the element of surprise that not only procures a sudden illumination, but all the pleasure as well. Imagine a slalom skier propelled with each turn not just in another direction, but on to a completely different slope. In this way he manages to travel four different journeys at once, though the point is not in the journeys themselves but in the beauty of his leap from one world to the next.

Gabriel Bocángel, a Spanish Baroque poet, wrote a sonnet describing two horses in a race. The riders pretend to outstrip each other but gradually began imitating each other's motion to such perfection that they became veritable doubles, provoking astonishment with this spectacular effect. In a famous essay, Ramón Menéndez Pidal examined the history of the treacherous countess Doña Argentine, as handed down by tradition. Her crazed love for Almanzor, the Muslim leader, makes her disarm her husband and surrender the castle to the enemy; later she tries to poison her son, but an angel warns him, so he refuses the poison and forces his mother to drink it instead. Don Ramón distinguishes between the historic and the legendary elements of this tale, and traces its origins to Italy and Syria; but in the end he decides that perhaps the story happened several times, in Syria, in Italy, and also in Spain. It is, in other words, what is known as an Immortal Story. It travels the centuries in search of victims in which to be embodied. None of the embodiments are perfect, and the imperfection of these mortal

incarnations of the tale only serve to underline the perfection of the original. The same man, Menéndez Pidal, investigated the story of Doña Gala, cast by medieval poets as a lover of Charlemagne. He discovered that this lady never existed and is only the allegorical representation of the Via Gallica, a network of roads that Charlemagne had built in the Iberian Peninsula. In a Tang dynasty tale, a gardener is taken in his dreams to a far-off garden. The Emperor has asked to see him, for he has dreamed that the gardener will save the Empire from the threat of flood. He weds the gardener with his daughter; she bears him children, who bear him grandchildren in their turn. But like all good Chinese he wishes to return to die in his native land, lest he become a phantom. The gardener bids his family goodbye, including his son the Emperor. Together they cry. Upon his arrival in his home, he feels tired, lies down, and sleeps. When he awakens, he discovers that no time has passed. He remembers he promised himself he would water the garden before sunset. As he is watering, he recognizes among the thousand ants drowned at his feet, his children, his grandchildren, and his wife.

In the epic poem *Bróellir* — a free interpretation of Starkather's poem and of Saxo Grammatico's *Gestus of Kings and Heroes* (Book VII) — the neo-medieval poet Pau Sima describes a cosmic battle in which the princes of all the Viking lands are called to combat by a blind king. From Florida to Russia, from the weakest to the most powerful lords, all the Viking princes are summoned to the Last Battle. The battlefield is not much larger than a football stadium. They fight in order of arrival. The first army begins just before dawn. They all perish, covering the entire field with corpses. The bodies are trampled by the next combatants — and almost immediately, new armies crush these again. Around midday, there are several layers of dead, gradually forming a mountain. Innumerable birds of prey fly above, drawn by the blood. Rats blacken the surrounding plain, a living carpet extending beyond the horizon. Not long before dusk, the mountain of dead on which the last of the living are still doing battle begins oozing thick vapor; a blood-red cloud rises above the hill and hides the black clouds of carrion-eating birds that have obscured the blue sky since mid-afternoon. Protected by the red cloud, and without waiting for the

end of the battle at dusk, the birds plunge down upon the mountain of corpses, tear them apart and fly off carrying arms, heads, and innards; inside each piece of human, duelling rats struggle and fall to the ground, shaken free by the battling birds. Rats, arms, heads, viscera, all rain down on the mountain, darkening the land before the sunset. In these muscled visions of the Viking kingdom's apocalypse, the network of events involving man and beast produce a landscape (a mountain in the rain). We bear witness to a passage from the dramatic world of the battle to the lyrical world of the mountain. Bloody deeds give way to the solemn emergence of a landscape. But there is more than landscape in the shamanic camera's play with the beyond. One of the most fertile inventions of our imagination is the figure we give to the cosmos, even though it loses its human substance to become a celestial form at one with the universe. How many simpler cases do we not find in nature? Faces appear in the clouds, the stars, the stones, sometimes in chemical reactions, in damp patches on walls. Wherever we turn, a human figure is composing or decomposing (as Blake says, "All landscapes are a man seen from a distance.") Adam Protoplast, the cabalist Isaac Luriah calls him. The universal mind takes human shape; but it also contains all souls, all species, all psyches, all spirits. Coleridge remarks in his *Journal*, after a conversation with Wordsworth, that they have discovered a poetic process which is almost childlike: writing poems in which humans behave like plants, and plants like humans.

A few weeks ago, I was wandering through my neighborhood in Paris when a sudden burst of rain drove me into a video store. Waiting for the rain to stop, I searched aimlessly through the shop. Hiding between two porn films and some Italian comedy I discovered *The Black Cat*, a horror movie by Edgar Ulmer. I bought it and watched it that very night. The rain in the film was like the rain over Paris. A heavy musical soundtrack muffled the sound of the sirens in the street outside and the screaming of the story's victims. On the screen was a train, animated by light and shade, inhabited by transient images that were suggested — almost invented — by the engine's billowing steam. The music was erratic, drifting from Brahms to Liszt. Suddenly Bela Lugosi appeared. The day before I had lunched with Martin Landau, who plays Bela

Lugosi in the new Tim Burton movie. We discussed the possibility of an anachronistic movie in which Lugosi accepts the position of Hungarian Minister of Culture. The story is authentic: he was offered the job by János Kádár. In our film, Lugosi returns to his homeland and becomes a real-life Count Dracula whose victims are cultural dissidents. Martin Landau and I often discussed the intensely poetic character of films directed by Ed Woods, Reginald Le Borg, Ford Beebe, and others — films shot in a few days. Their flaws are perhaps the very essence of their poetry.

During that lunch I had as usual wandered from one theory to another, discussing various books which to me are like traveling companions. One of the things I mentioned was an article by the logician Jaakko Hintikka discussing a general theory of language, or rather, general semantic paradigms. Hintikka contrasts the "recursive" paradigm, in which language is a process governed by preexisting rules, and where coherent development is guaranteed by a return to such rules, to the "strategic" paradigm, in which language is considered as a completed ensemble where, as if on a football field, words and concepts play games whose rules can be determined at the outset of each match. It occurred to me that this distinction could be applied to films. We could distinguish between films which are governed by strict rules, progress in a disorderly fashion, and occasionally go back and check to make sure the original rules have not been forgotten (Neo-Realism) and other films which admit they are merely pre-established games whose variations are consonant with the initial rules, judged acceptable in view of some strategy, for example, a winner's strategy (Hollywood). I realized that by slightly twisting the meaning, the approaches suggested by the two paradigms could be combined: within a series of stories governed by periodically verifiable rules, each story is a potential game in itself, and thus subject to a strategic paradigm whose fulfillment occurs outside the film, in some kind of fictional space outside the frame. Many examples can be found among commercial films to illustrate this theory. Ulmer's *Black Cat* is one of the best, the most drastic, and the most problematic. The film is made up of a series of situations, each with a life of its own. For instance, Boris Karloff playing chess; Bela Lugosi escaping from cats; a World War I battle that took place a few years ago outside Boris Karloff's Bauhaus-style

castle. All these elements represent fictions independent of the storyline. None of these stories end in the fictional space of the film, but somewhere else. And yet there is an "effect of unity" that builds a bridge between these two narrative paradigms.

At this point I should make clear what cinematographic principles I am proposing. My style is not a direct one and in order to keep in tune with myself, I have chosen an early eighteenth-century Chinese text which explains and suggests a series of directions with the help of six procedures that make up, in my opinion, a poetics most useful for the shaman. This text is called *Opinions on Painting by the Monk of the Green Pumpkin*. It was written by the painter Shih-T'ao. My comments are based on Pierre Ryckmans' translation and François Cheng's essay *Plein et vide: le langage pictural chinois*. Shih-T'ao's treatise is a compilation of seventeen short chapters on the principles of traditional Chinese painting. He does not just restate the techniques of the eight strokes, the three perspectives, or the dialectic of fullness and emptiness; his restatement breathes new life and new coherence into what had become obsolete principles. He does this by emphasizing the importance of the art (or manner) of looking. Like many Chinese painters, Shih-T'ao believed that paintings must be made once and for all, at a single stroke, with just one breath; but the mark on the paper should also respect the logic of the world, of this world. Letting the world breathe is more important than how we breathe in the face of the world.

In Chapter II, entitled "The Six Processes," Shih-T'ao summarizes the six ways to deal with the visible world. The First Process: draw the attention to a scene emerging from a static background. Shih-T'ao's example is the following: against a backdrop of winter mountains, a spring landscape. Two seasons are juxtaposed; two times of year exist simultaneously. Extrapolating, we can imagine two fighters against a cityscape of New York. In terms of film, we build the set before placing the actors, according to the rules implicit in the action. We can move closer in or further away from them without ever demanding any movement from the background. Most films work like this.

The Second Process is less easy to understand. Make the background dynamic and draw the attention towards it, by making

the foreground static — even though, in principle, it ought to be dynamic too. For instance, according to Shih-T'ao: a monk impassively observing a flower, while in the distance a storm breaks over a mountain. In film this could be achieved by editing in such a way that the background seems as important as the foreground. For instance, to use our old example, we could be less charitable towards the fighters and integrate them into a sequence where the background is the real actor. Thus, a fight begins in New York; the fight becomes gradually repetitive or monotonous; we start to notice cats strolling on the roofs of the buildings in the background. Our attention is drawn through a window in one of the buildings towards a girl who is unaware of the fight going on outside and is practicing Schubert on the piano. The fight becomes stratified, drags on monotonously. The real energy of the scene resides in the movement of the girl's hand across the keyboard.

The Third Process entails adding scattered dynamism to immobility. Shih-T'ao calls this "elements full of life where death reigns." Imagine the same New York set. Gradually, the pianist's hand and the fight combine. The weather is variable. Racing clouds across the sun. Every ten seconds, the light changes. Occasional rays of sunlight rake through the background. Birds invade the set. The wind sweeps away dead leaves. We see the corpse of a man killed while reading Li Po, but we ignore the cadaver and focus in on the poem.

The Fourth Process consists in introducing incomplete or interrupted figures: a pagoda emerges through the clouds, a tree stands out in the fog. Back to New York. Birds fly about in the changing light, disappearing behind buildings and suddenly reappearing where least expected. The set is crisscrossed by characters from earlier stories; we hardly recognize them before they're gone. In the distance, something that looks like a plane crashing. But towards the end of the sequence, this bit of the story is omitted. We'll never find out whether the crash happened or not.

The Fifth Process: reversal of function. What ought to be dynamic becomes static and vice-versa. New York again. The fighters, the piano player, and the wandering characters all stop what they're doing to look up at a rainbow.

The Sixth Process is known as vertigo. We enter the painting. The multiplicity of events becomes an organic whole to which we belong in body and gaze.

Since the birth of cinema, the category of "illusionism" has covered the history of audience captivation (whether monothematic cult-film addicts or those who find it easier to believe in film logic than the logic of the world). One of the first radical critiques of cinema (and of theater) was to say that an excess of illusion is a moral failure because it amounts to a denial of the real world and its "urgent" problems. These criticisms have been ungenerous. They do not distinguish between the act of entering hypnotically into the world of a film, and that other type of illusion which is to doze off and wake up several times within the space of a single film. Despite the philosophers who consider dreams and memory contradictory — Schopenhauer explains in his treatise on ghosts that a certain paralysis of the memory is needed to dream of the dead — we should not be particularly surprised that the person we are speaking to has been dead these many years, no more than he should be to see us living, even though another ghost has informed him of our own death ten years past. To build a world capable of providing this type of image-situation, changing the rules by which films are made will certainly not suffice. We must also change the internal logic of the events shown, and modify the very way in which visual and fictional spaces are put together.

I cannot go into this much more deeply now. Let me just give a few elementary principles. Insofar as story structure is concerned, I should like propose an open structure based on *ars combinatoria*. A system of multiple stories, overlapping according to certain established rules. This process is capable of generating new stories. For instance, ten themes or designs (like designs in a Persian carpet), story lines which are both dramas and vectors. These themes can be considered either as "bridges" or schemas. They may be simple stories, fables, or sequences from daily life, numbered from zero to nine. At first they are exposed in order, then combined in pairs — thus number ten is a combination of number zero and number one, number eighty-three is a combination of number eight and number three, etc. This is not just a way of writing, but a way of filming.

These combinations work better if they arise during the shoot. Ideally, in this system, there is no difference between writing a script and writing a film. I will not go into all the possibilities which this system provides, but I ought to highlight the difference between what I am suggesting and cold or saturated combinations like those of Georges Pérec. The simple juxtaposition of two obsessional elements necessarily generates a brand-new situation. Because this involves hyperspace and its place in the combinatory system, I will make a brief detour here. As a child in Chiloé, a land of monsters and mythic creatures, I heard the story of a monster. And what made him a monster was that he could not be described, not because his form was constantly mutating but precisely because he had no form of any kind. A monster without qualities. Or rather only one, but a big one: his size. In fact, his name meant "big": Buta. He was so big he was invisible. He was only big. That's all he was. This monster raised a question as old as philosophy itself: can space be an object? In other words, can we conceive of plural space, each part of which is both a transcendental category, a plaything, and a crossroads? Scott of Erigen's solution to this conundrum is: "If space were an object, there would be as many different spaces as there are objects"; and I would add, as there are relations between objects, which is just what interests us in virtual space.

But does it make any sense to say of an object that it is surrounded by a space of its own? The early theologians of Islam conceived an atomic system in which each atom was surrounded by a kind of atmosphere, a soul, a spiritual envelope. An ensemble of atoms composing a complex body required another type of atmosphere, and each time ensembles of these bodies composed a larger body they surrounded themselves with a different type of space. This depended not only on the size of the ensembles but on the particular conditions governing the appearance and disappearance of bodies. We humans are nothing other than an artificial system of concentric material envelopes (*guilaf*) without any other unifying factor than God, who inserts each one into the next (cf. Louis Massignon on Hallaj mysticism, and Harry A. Wolfson's *Le Kalam*).

If you are interested in any specific one of these ensembles, you must conceive or invent a way to show the type of space that

surrounds it. It remains then to establish the rules for transitions from one space to the next. The same holds for time: each particular only lasts for an instant specific to itself — no single, unified time exists. Therefore each object and each ensemble possess a specific space and time.

Now let's make the effort of imagining a cinema which can reflect such a world. We can conceive a certain type of filming capable of treating each segment of the world and the objects it contains "case by case." Capable as well of letting us travel to the confines of creation through the simple juxtaposition of a small number of trembling images. In this radical impressionism, the never-seen would be within our grasp. The cinema would become the perfect instrument for the revelation of the possible worlds which coexist right alongside our own.

In her book *Mind: an essay on human feeling*, Susanne K. Langer notes that although we have developed both human and animal psychology, we have no psychology of plants. Myself, I wonder about the absence of a mineral psychology (did Whitehead not see stones as the example of a perfect society, or at least of a perfectly conservative society?)

At bottom I am speaking of nothing other than a cinema capable of inventing a new grammar each time it goes from one world to the next, capable of producing a unique emotion before every thing, every animal, every plant, simply by modifying the parameters of space and time. But this implies a constant practice of both attention and detachment, an ability to enter into the act of filming and return an instant afterward to passive contemplation. In short, a cinema capable of accounting, above all, for the varieties of experience in the sensible world. Easily said...

CHAPTER VI

Mystery and Ministry

In this chapter we shall play bureaucracy. Two teams are playing: Mystery versus Ministry. Before the match begins it's worth pointing out that long ago the two teams used to be one, until they they split. Both are sporting organizations, which allows them to play together. They accept the same rules because they share the same ideals of sportsmanship. Let us stress that, as far as this chapter goes, all institutions, all organizations, that is, all organic associations of human beings, have their origins in sports. Of course we will be in agreement that a sport is a game of competence and competition, where competing against the others is more important than winning, where building the team is more important than any goal except for that of participating in the competition, for the love of competing. Let's examine the teams. On the one hand, Mystery presents itself in the garb of a votive religion (the kind of religion where one communicates with divinity through a system of exchange, as in: "if you take away my toothache, I'll go up and down the Empire State Building forty-five times"; communication with the divine takes place through an image such as Asklepios statue, or a stain of moisture on the wall, or even an image of the Virgin). Like Nature, Mystery is a team that enjoys hiding. Nature is cryptic, and Mystery, like certain carnivorous flowers, enjoys hiding its deeper nature through an unembarrassed display of ambiguous charms.

Before getting into the nature of Ministry, let's have a brief description of the game: Mystery fabricates objects, and Ministry

tries to take them away. The objects fabricated by Mystery are unique, unrepeatable (but they can be copied). When Ministry steals one of these objects, they yell "Prototype," they put it into mass production, and they score a point. If Mystery succeeds in hiding the object and Ministry cannot find it, then Mystery scores. Mystery players make objects of widely different kinds, but they essentially fall into two main groups: utopias and artworks. Those objects that are neither utopias nor artworks will be called "other objects."

We are going to concentrate on the artworks, for the sake of brevity. Artworks in this game are imaginary organizations of the world which, in order to be activated, need to be put in contact with one or more human beings. They are of different kinds, let's recall a few of them: delinquent artworks, that is, experimental or imaginary actions whose purpose is to test the cohesiveness of society (these actions are always imaginary transgressions). Another kind: perfect worlds, structures which achieve a saturation of the relationship between the parts and the whole: call it harmony. As Arnheim says, "Men are astonished that God, being perfect, can create an imperfect world, but they are not astonished that men, being imperfect, can create perfect worlds." In these works the diverse component elements are, so to speak, in a state of axiomatization. In such a state their beauty dwells. Another kinds of artwork: innovative works that invent new ways to create artistic objects whose artistry is not in the object but in the technique (or procedure) of fabrication. Other works discover new territories of the imagination. These are divided into four types. First are the ones that imitate the kind of voyage invented by French explorers such as Bougainville: these are works that travel to the antipodes of the real world (that is, the playing field) and immediately return. The grand tour is always made in a straight line. Then there are the ones that imitate the English explorers: they travel drawing spirals, touching only upon the harbors of the territory to be explored and never going in. Next, the ones that imitate the Spanish conquerors: they choose a territory to be explored and they exhaust it by going through it in every possible direction. Finally, the ones that imitate the German geographers: they explore vast territories going from summit to summit, which gives them a vision of the land consisting exclusively of overarching panoramas. There must be many other kinds, but I'll

stop here for the sake of avoiding distraction. You will have understood that when I speak of delinquent artworks I refer to those which praise folly, crime, insanity, and death. Among those artists you must have guessed the notorious presence of Erasmus, Artaud, Sade, Saint Theresa, Mishima, and Cervantes. Among the artists of perfect worlds, we'll list numerous musicians (all of them Western, by the way), a few poets like Dante and Gongora, Zen and Arabic calligraphers, and certain painters including Piero della Francesca, Velázquez, Shih-T'ao, and Vermeer. Among the inventors, the choice is vast: Duchamp, Pérec, Arcimboldo, John Cage. Among the Spanish explorers, Schoenberg, Joyce, and Proust. Among the Germans, Tolstoy. With the French we will list Vicente Huidobro, Tristan Tzara, Jean-Marie Straub, and Danièle Huillet. Finally, among the English, Joseph Conrad and Pablo Neruda.

Mystery functions with an arbitrary and anti-democratic organization. The captains of the team are self-proclaimed, and their existence depends upon the fascination they exert upon their players and followers, who can at any point abandon them for a better captain (that is, a still more arbitrary or tyrannical path). Mystery imitates a hell invented by Islam. Their captains are angels accomplishing infernal tasks at the direct command of God (in spite of which they are still considered to be absolutely good). Mystery's works are unique and unrepeatable, every one of them obeying a singular rhetoric that does not apply to any other, but is nonetheless capable of reorganizing the real world according to its own dictates. Mystery is whimsical, declaring the dream visions of its captain to be laws of general value; and it is also parodic, because it makes willfully grotesque copies of the hierarchical orders of its rival, Ministry.

Ministry has a totally different organization. It is a body whose entrails are in open air, its hierarchical orders are absolutely available, the changes in the team follow rules that everybody knows. In this sense it is superior to Mystery, since it can openly alter the rules of the game, without any need for secrecy. We have already said that the goal of the game is to steal the works prepared by Mystery. Once in its hands, the object becomes serialized and available for general distribution, following the golden rule: Reality

is a public service. Mystery is born by spontaneous generation, while Ministry is reproduced through cloning. Its basic hierarchical order engenders other hierarchical orders, which in turn produce other hierarchical orders, and so on.

In all that precedes and all that will follow there is not the least attempt to praise Mystery and attack the indispensable Ministry. In some games — for instance, the Mithraic Mystery of the Roman Legions against the Ministry of the Christian (Augustinian) Church, or the match between the Mystery of the Catholic Church and the Ministry of the People in France in 1793, or later the Mystery of the Citizen against the Ministry of the State, not to forget the Mystery of Ecstasy against the Ministry of the Holy Inquisition, and today, the Mystery of the Opinion Polls against the Ministry of the Republics of One, or the Mystery of Multipersonal Units against the Ministry of Statistics — in some games, as I say, my personal preferences would lean now toward one and now toward the other, depending on the fluctuations of personal motivations as they waver between the mysterious and the ministerial. Before describing other matches that I remember, I'll dwell briefly on the composition of each team.

Ministry, public or private, shows itself as a group of men at everyone's service, subject to a schematic organization that attempts to describe each individual role: subject, that is, to a hierarchical order. The hierarchical order describes the respective function of each player in the field. It is available to everybody, regardless of whether or not they are members of the team. There is only one reading, the literal one. Any allegorical, ethical, or anagogical reading is senseless. Any given hierarchical order is immediately replaceable by a better one. The efficacy of any given hierarchical order is a function of its ability to deal with unforeseen events. Ministry loses the game when the hierarchical order privileges internal struggles and forgets the match itself. A hierarchical order is always functional, in the sense that it prefers the function over the reasons for the functioning. Ministry practices memory, the memory of publicly available facts. Mystery practices secrecy, concealment, in some cases oblivion.

But memory is itself a Ministry. All ministries need to remember facts but the accumulation of memories is not a superior cause except for the Ministry of memory.

I will briefly sum up the history of memory, since it is an obvious case of a Ministry born in Mystery. If we believe the Western tradition, the transition from the Simonides myth to contemporary libraries can be summed up in this way: having been invited to recite a poem in front of a group of Scopas' guests, Simonides of Zeos sung a lyric poem during the banquet. He was careful to direct his gaze from right to left, briefly stopping for each guest, so that his poem was recited for every one. Before finishing, Simonides thought it good to devote a few strophes to the praise of Castor and Pollux, and the host, a jealous man, decided to pay Simonides half of the accorded price, saying that Castor and Pollux should make up the difference. A short time later, still during the banquet, Simonides received a message. Two men were waiting for him outside the palace. As Simonides went out, the roof of the palace crumbled, killing everybody. The guests were totally disfigured, posing serious questions for the funeral rites; but thanks to Simonides all the corpses could be identified, because in his great courtesy he had recited for the entire banquet and not only for the prince, so naturally he remembered everyone's respective positions. It took a full strophe for Simonides to make a complete circle from right to left. This led him to associate each guest with a particular verse in the poem as well as a particular place in the room. Now, mentally reciting the poem again, he could literally see with his mind's eye the location of the guests after every related verse. He could see them one by one, he could remember their attitudes of rapt attention or boredom. In fact, he could visualize the events just as in a film. Text, place, and image: the triad of classical memory had been invented. But the technique of memory as later developed remained a secret; neither Cicero nor Quintillian was willing to reveal it. Before constituting a Ministry, the art of memory remained a Mystery. We had to wait until the days of the Evangelical militant Petrus Ramus for a mnemotechnic system without mental palaces, text, or emblematic images. In systems like his, discourse is divided into functions, into groups of facts, organized according to alphabetical order or the order of natural numbers. To remember within this system, one has to investigate the text first, decompose it to its elements, that is, one must understand the text. The Mystery of memory becomes a Ministry.

I said at the beginning that this brief history concerns memory in the West. Other practices of memory can not be understood as either Mystery or Ministry. For instance, the so-called *memorillas*: theatrical spies, almost always women, who would go to the performances of seventeenth-century plays in order to steal them and publish them before anyone else; they were able to remember them perfectly after the very first audition. I like to imagine they used their own faces as *loci*, or memory palaces, and that their grimaces and other facial expressions were the images — but certainly it may have been more complex than that. It is possible that they were able to listen to the totality of the text superimposing it to their face *en bloc*, like the message transmitted by the drums in Africa: a syntax-less body of messages, immediately recognizable, like the face of a beloved being or the *paella* that your mother used to cook. Another instance of non-Western memory: the transmission of knowledge hidden in children's songs (the Bambaras of Mali), in prostitutes' tattoos in Morocco (according to Abdelkébir Khatibi). But in any event, we must be getting back to the game between Mystery and Ministry.

My interest in speaking about classical and modern memory is to distinguish between classical and modern Ministry. We have already seen that the classical ministry is born in Mystery. Somebody founds it, preaches it, teaches it, and gains disciples who meet secretly until the community accepts them. At that point, they can make their knowledge public, but never totally so. In the modern Ministry the organization is born out of everybody's will, and it is addressed to all. It has a praiseworthy mission and a protecting order. Of Mystery there is little we can say. We know it has a hierarchical order too, but its dissemination is forbidden to the uninitiate. It is also possible that it changes in every match. It has been said that it is typical for Mystery to hide, and it may be that secrecy is not just a condition, but the very substance, the ultimate reason for being of Mystery. Pico della Mirandola assures us that every Mystery is in contact with every other Mystery, as is the case with mirrors. Cabbalah, Christian mysteries, and Platonic Eleusinian mysteries would teach us substantially the same thing, for they partake in the same revelation. That is why it does not appear contradictory to Pico that poets like to become members of every secret society they can. We know that the Mysteries' *raison d'être* goes beyond the

playing field, but we are not so interested in transcendent finalities as in the manner whereby most of the Mysteries they have been slowly secularizing. Just as the City of God was secularized into Dante's Universal Monarchy and then, after a few centuries, into a monarchy eventually headed by the prosaic Charles V, in the same way Eleusinian, Rosicrucian, and Isis Multimamian Mysteries have also been secularized into societies seeking social advancement for humanity.

The few mystery societies whose hierarchical order has become known to us are precisely those which were never able to transform themselves into Ministry, through a poor or excessive organization. I want to rapidly examine two of them, one called Recta Provincia and the other called Golden Dawn. I don't want to inflict upon you the complete hierarchical order of both, since it would take several hours, and would be boring and too self-referential and too vague in any case. Golden Dawn mixes the schemas of the Templar and Teutonic Orders with the Mideast Mystical confraternities and Victorian ceremonials such as London club regulations. All of which serves as ornament for a corpus of Celtic and Saxon Myths. The Recta Provincia, a society of sorcerers in Southern Chile, in Chiloé, copies the structures of the Inquisition and the Spanish Empire, and combines them with the regulations and the rituals of passage of Galician medicine men, *meigos*, and the organization of Machi and Huilliche shamans, as well as hierarchical orders of a Republican origin.

Let's see how a secret order from the Regional Council, or Mayoria, actually works. The so-called Mayoria assembly is in communication with the confraternities of sorcerers and shamans (who operate in a separate way like freelance professionals, but join efforts in a common program to satisfy the ends of the permanent association). The payment of annual fees and the contributions for special projects — the poisoning of entire island populations, for instance — is applied for through the various confraternities. The payment of special contributions is done separately by the shamans and the sorcerers. They are paid to the Mayoria assembly, but those contributions have different purposes. The sorcerer's contributions go to the King of the Underground, whose see is in Tenaüm, the

mystical twin of Santiago de Chile. The Machis' contributions go to the King of the Earth, in Quicabí, the mystical twin of Lima. The underground King is the counterpower to the Peruvian Viceroy, and the King of the Earth is the counterpower to the Chilean Governor. Subject to the first is the Underground President, and to the second, the Earth President. (Let's recall in passing that for the theologian Fuentelapeña, taxes on mermaids, whenever found, should be made payable to the Dean of Santiago, whereas taxes on tritons were reserved for the King of Portugal.) It is peculiar that the so-called King of Spain in Recta Provincia, counterpower to the true King of Spain, has in the hierarchical order attributions equivalent to those of the Underground King and the Earth King, and it is even more significant that all three of them depend upon the so-called Commander of the Earth, who is the Commander-in-Chief of the sorcerer armed forces: the Flyers, Swimmers, and Runners. This Commander owes obedience only to the King of the Recta Provincia, who is helped in his functions by a General Visitor, a Composer Judge, and a Scribe.

Although such a structure is not altogether symmetrical and manifests a tendency to the vicious circle, still it is much more democratic than the structure of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. This sect has three orders. The Exterior Order includes members of five different degrees, ranging from Minor to Major: Neophytes, Guards, Theoreticians, Practitioners, Philosophers. The Major Order, the so-called Red Rose of the Golden Cross, has four kinds of members, also ranging from Minor to Major: Lords of the Portal of the Adept, Minor Adept, Major Adept, and Exemptus Adept. Both orders must blindly obey the first, called the Order of the Secret Chiefs. It includes, from Minor to Major: Lord of the Abyss, Magister Templi, Magus, and Ipsissimus.

Bureaucracies in the two briefly described Mysteries share the tendency to be reduced models of society, but magically expandable, and bursting with the ambition to occupy the whole world. But that mastery over the world is magical, poetic, to be accomplished though sacramental means, and not through military power. Thus every Chiloé village where sorcerer authorities reside has a magical correspondence with other locations in the world. Everything that

happens in those villages has repercussions in the twin city, following rules of equivalence we do not know. Some examples: the little village of Achao is also Buenos Aires. Dalcaue is Villa Rica, Aucar is Antofagasta. The further away the twin city is, the smaller the Chiloé original is supposed to be. Thus Payos, a hamlet of about a thousand inhabitants, is Spain's twin, and Achao, not much bigger, is that of the United States.

In a different way, the Golden Dawn Society believes itself to be the religion of religions. In its rituals, through a poetic *bricolage*, the Magical Old Teutonic Sword is mixed with cabalistic Hebrew games and meditation techniques derived from India. Some emblems show the Christian Cross tangled in a Hindu labyrinth at whose center one distinguishes the Star of David, its own center occupied by the Indo-European Swastika. If we examine the sect's imagined territory, we discover the British Empire before the Second World War. Golden Dawn liturgy teaches us a lot more about the imperialistic mentality of the Brits than many merely political critiques. In the same way, Freud's works indirectly describe the complex bureaucracy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

While the Ministry manifests itself by means of several civil servants — since a Ministry is above all a distribution of functions — Mystery can exist with a single member. Thus is the case of the solitary painter, the errant philosopher, the mystic fasting in the desert, the dissident intellectual in authoritarian societies. For the match between Mystery and Ministry to take place, it is above all necessary that each one of the teams declare itself in favor of different ideas. The Ministry declares itself in favor of the community of good men that make up the Republic, and the Mystery supports the community of a new humanity to come, or of the occult wise men of the past. The first decides to defend the real world because it is visible. The second defends the real world because it is invisible. At the beginning, they attack each other with enigmas. The match starts: the Ministry declares itself an individual and the Mystery a republic. Thus, the Ministry proclaims through Louis XIV's mouth, "I am the State"; and the Mystery replies with Spartacus, "I will return as millions," or with Fernando de Pessoa, "I am a single multitude." But now the Ministry returns with Flaubert's "*Madame Bovary, c'est moi.*" The Ministry of

the Church announces "I am the Light and the Truth," and mysterious Ulysses replies, "My name is nobody." It's the end of the first half.

We shall now take advantage of this pause to take a look at some famous encounters. We are in China during the epoch known as the Springs and Autumns, in the sixth century B.C.. In those times, the man of Letters began to impose himself in public affairs: the man of Letters, advisor to the prince and designer of lifestyles. The Scribes declared that it was unthinkable to separate the public sphere from culture without allowing oneself to be dragged along by political passion, by wars, by the desires of the prince, without losing neutrality, the independence of the artist and the intellectual. The only way of not being contradictory was to postulate the existence of a distant epoch, in which other men of Letters maintained clear ideas about everything. The present man of Letters merely had to consult the dead man of Letters who was beyond all possibility of corruption or passion, thus neutral and just. In order to sacralize their authority, the Literati began to honor their ancestors with pomp; and this civic ceremony became the official religion. It was then that mysterious monks rebelled against the ministerial men of Letters. As instruments of their sport they used total indifference to this world, together with a search for peace. In order to do this, they proclaimed that the best way to learn is to unlearn. The match would last a couple of centuries. In the fourth century, Shang Yang, prime minister in the Qin State — but playing on the Mystery team — translated the mysterious principles of Lao Tzu in terms comprehensible for any ministerial civil servant. He proclaimed, "Attention, if the ten worms are freed [the ten worms make up the Book of Odes, including: a Compendium of all Poetry, the Book of Documents, which are law codices, and the Books of Rites, Music, Virtue, Talent, Probity, Rhetoric, and Intelligence — but you will have counted only nine worms, me too] the prince will find himself without peasants, without soldiers, without State." Later he insists that the Six Parasites are Rites and Music, the Book of Odes and the Book of Documents, Love for Wise men, Respect for Parents and Ancestors, Sincerity and Probity, Morality and Justice, Pacifism and Anti-militarism. A century and a half further on, the first Emperor, Che Huang-ti, ordered the burning of all books except those of agriculture, medicine, divination, and military

strategy. Mystery is declared the winner, 1-0; but it begins its slow transformation into ministry as well.

Another match took place in Spain in the late sixteenth century. The mysterious Bartolomé Carranza, confessor to Charles V and Philip II, a saintly, generous and unambitious man (he refused the Archdiocese of Cuzco and other high-standing positions in the Holy Inquisition, accepting only the modest position of simple Inquisitor; he begged for the poor in times of hunger, he had no desire for books or fortune, nor for any other object). Carranza was charged to combat heresies in Flanders and England. In England they called him the Black Monk, confessor to Mary of Tudor, better known as Bloody Mary. For years the inquisitor exhumed the bones of heretics buried on Holy ground, and burned them together with their books. He returned to Spain to burn Jews and lapsed Justificationists, attacking their ideas from the pulpit and proclaiming that faith is not enough for salvation, that deeds and good works are required. One night, at dinner with friends, he confessed: "I would burn all my works if I could regain my faith in Christ." But what works? The majority of his works were fires; the dream of the inquisitor is to burn flames (the same dream as the poet Ibn al-Zaqqaq, but Zaqqaq meant to say love). The heretics, whom he had perhaps never seen close up, the mysterious heretics had infected Carranza's ministry. The Inquisition imprisoned him and denied him the pyre. Ministry 1, Mystery 1.

Another encounter took place a little later on, in the mid-eighteenth century, in Chiloé. Admiral Moraleda, delegated sub-Inquisitor, reached the Great Island of the Archipelago with the mission of fighting the sorcerers of Recta Provincia. The Inquisitor did not want to use violence, preferring persuasion and theater. He disputed with Ancud's inhabitants, and organized military ceremonies in the attempt to persuade them. Perhaps his argumentation was too eloquent. There may have been a shade too much insistence upon defending the ideas of the Holy Mother the Church. In any case his efforts were more than enough to cause the island's inhabitants to spread the rumor that the Inquisitor was really the King of Recta Provincia, Most Principal Sorcerer, and therefore Mortal Enemy of the True Religion. Many villages took up arms against the Admiral's troops, and brandishing crosses and guns they called for his hanging. They almost got it, but thanks to the

providential assistance of a few sorcerers, medicine men, and shamans, he managed to escape the island. Mystery wins 1-0, since Ministry scored against itself.

We could multiply the examples. Of these encounters, whether they take the form of a struggle between dissidents and the powers that be, of solitary artists against the academy, of traitors against the hero, of the old against the new, we can always say that whoever loses wins, and whoever wins loses. Ministry's police repression favors (if not actually creates) the subversive function of Mystery; and in the very heat of the battle, its hierarchical orders command the publication of Mystery's secrets, and therefore its conversion to Ministry. All this has happened many times. Ministry gains in secrets — which, for it, is a way of losing; while Mystery, whose substance consists only of shadows, cannot help but vanish as it comes forth into the light — and therefore it loses as well. These circles could have gone on spinning indefinitely, if in this century the very nature of Mystery had not begun to change. Instead of discretion it now prefers public exhibition, and indeed it never risks even that without clarifying everything beforehand; there is no longer a shadow zone where the mysterious players can marshal their forces and practice their moves. We can call this phenomenon a ministerialization of Mystery: its immediate consequence is to affect the nature of the Ministers, who themselves become increasingly mysterious. Let's take France in the early eighties as an example. At that time, a small group of filmmakers were regularly producing mysterious, unclassifiable films, to be made public by the Ministry with great fanfare and not the slightest embarrassment. Somebody had a brilliant idea: if financial aid to film were multiplied by a factor of ten, then by all the best logic we should have ten times as many of these mysterious productions. But Mystery requires shadows, and money is solar in nature. Mysteriously, very few new enigmatic filmmakers appeared; however there were plenty of new administrators, who proclaimed themselves mysterious alchemists able to transform a mysterious film into a marketable product. Money mysteriously disappeared, leaving only void space — drained of all mysterious films, though brilliantly illuminated.

It would be unjust to restrict relations between Mystery and Ministry to playing fields and competitions. There have been areas

in which both institutional forms have cooperated with great enthusiasm. Perhaps the best known case in the European world is the long period of Christian theology's secularization, the handout or donation of sacred and in principle nontransferable institutions to the secular world and the power of laymen. From I.N.R.I. to the I.R.S. Take the dogma of Hypostatic Union. God the Father incarnates in His Only Son, as divine as Himself, thanks to the mediation of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. This dogma is adopted by the secular power to explain the nature, at the same time human and divine, of the King. The King is divine, his decisions cannot be appealed, he cannot go wrong, he cannot die. Upon the death of the King of France, Louis XV, Charlemagne's sword is kept in custody during the Interregnum period by Papillon de la Ferte, the Mystical Double of the next King, Louis XVI, until the ceremony of his coronation. At this time the King is born into power, just like any other man. At the outset of the ceremony he is a newborn, naked and wrapped up in a shirt made of one piece. He is then washed by the Archbishop of Paris, who symbolically cuts the umbilical cord. Only the King can work miracles (this is a Capetian tradition, but its origin lies in old Indo-European rituals). The King cannot be murdered by a human hand, or be killed by disease. The King only dies because he kills himself in a ritual hunt, where he is at the same time the hunter and the hunted, the propitiatory deer. That is why, when he dies, the cadaver of the King is driven down the Great Central Avenue of Versailles on a cart, at full speed, and in the corners the hunting horns blow and the battle cry of hunters rings out: *Tayaut! Tayaut! Tayaut!* That may be the reason why Louis XVI was dressed in green during the Night of Varennes, at the moment of his arrest. We could multiply the examples of initiation ceremonies with an origin in Mystery, which little by little become integrated into normative systems for the use of Ministries.

I'd like to finish telling you a story whose interest lies in the fact that it makes our problem absolutely irrefutable, by which I mean improbable, indeed mysterious. In the France of 1793, right in the middle of the Terror, the Jesuit philosopher and Girondin revolutionary Charles Dupuis published a very long study called *The Origin of All Religions and/or Myths* (this book is not available in France, as the National Library won't lend its one copy; I have

only been able to read an abridged version held in the National Library of Chile, in Santiago). The book seeks to prove that, whatever the myth we analyze, its origin will always be astronomical. Ravaud Saint-Etienne, another philosopher and a friend of Dupuis (who incidentally lost his head in 1793), extended the idea by affirming that the astronomical myths metamorphosed into agricultural myths through the mediation of theatrical representations, so that theater must be the point of contact between astronomy and geography. Giorgio Santillana, in the book *Hamlet's Mill* where he attempts to clarify the mysterious relations between epistemology and anthropology, says that one day he ran into Dupuis' volume. Leafing through it he was taken aback by a statement that he found exceedingly paradoxical: "Myth is born of science, science will explain it." Santillana says that he wasn't yet ready to understand such a conception. Some years later he met the anthropologist Hertha von Dechend, a disciple of Frobenius, and both of them started a comparative study of the history of modern science and the history of great American, Oceanian, and African civilizations. They produced several works which are probably more useful for an artist than they are for an epistemologist or an anthropologist. Studying the sea travels of the great Astronomer-Kings in Oceania they found that these travels sketch out the movements of the heavenly planets upon the sea; they also found that the Bambara masks in Mali are not cult instruments but astronomical schemas analyzed according to a relatively innovative mathematical system. Not going into details, the problem is whether or not so-called primitive men can develop scientific knowledge; and if so, then what is the relationship between that knowledge and ritual songs, masks, and ceremonies? Are they ministerial, that is, available theoretical objects, or mysterious ruses whose role is to conceal knowledge, in which case knowledge would appear as sacralized, and therefore mythic? If I go into this problem at length it is because for some years now I have been nursing an extravagant idea: it is normally considered that the secularization process is an exclusively a Western, Christian feat. But if we accept, with Dupuis, that behind every great myth there is always a science, and that myths always generate a religion, and that every religion, through secularization, always generates a political system, then we are faced

with a world-historical schema that has very little to do with the commonly accepted ones. But I am not an historian. That schema, although poetical, has the problem that it cannot be empirically verified. Talking about the shamanic function in film, I have tried to explain that the cinema I find interesting always involves a voyage to different worlds: these different worlds are not always the world of the dead, or the natural kingdoms. That vast game called history can also be an open territory for the shamanic filmmaker.

CHAPTER VII

The Cinema: Traveling Incognito

For a little more than a century the cinema will have lived among us, seducing and observing us as extraterrestrials or divinities sometimes do, then disappearing suddenly from one day to the next, not even leaving a moment for us to understand the machines or natural wonders were these. Today, on the heels of its death and transfiguration, we have formed the almost certain belief that its images, produced by strange machines, half camera, half bicycle, offer us innumerable enigmas that still await their mysterious key.

Alas, the effigy of cinema is no more among us. And if, not unlike certain primitive peoples, we persist in acting as though it lived and breathed, if we fabricate objects that evoke or question it, still what cinema once was can no longer be seen. For most of us it is already dead or in its death throes. For my part, I believe it has long since gasped its last, even if, like a god or any natural phenomenon, it may have taken up hiding to negotiate the conditions of its resurrection. Following a procedure of classical rhetoric, I will recount the life of cinema past, present, and future, as though it had never existed, or had never been anything more than sheer conjecture. I will try to lay out some of the philosophical problems that this vanished art proposed, and I will seek to explain its journey incognito through the grammatical city known for the moment as "virtual reality."

I'd like to recall that holding something up for dead is a philosophical artifice. Paul Valéry felt it indispensable in order to rethink a phenomenon without entering the sequential labyrinth of

"that most dangerous of poisons secreted by our mental alchemy": history. At the same time, in homage to the Hispanic artifice known as "the spirit of contradiction," my departure point will be Marc Bloch's affirmation of history. In response to Valéry, Bloch wrote a defence of history, a precious resource for clarifying the ideas that will circle through the uncertain space of this chapter. Commenting on the techniques for the falsification of documents, he claimed that human history includes periods of mythomania. To back up the fiction of "traveling incognito" I'd like to imagine that we are in such a period of mythomania; that in certain countries this mythomania has even seized power and is preparing to exercise it in view of supplanting the real world. From this point of view, the world in such an historical period will be an "intuition of the world," to use Croce's phrase — that is to say, it will be at once real and unreal. Remember that Croce was answering the question, "What is art?", with the help of just one word, "intuition." And even though his description of intuitive thinking does not explain the liberal arts, it does cast new light on the double nature of cinema, a politics for the arts and a language of the world.

Among the many works of merit that have sprung from the work of mourning since the death of cinema, nothing is more revealing than the series of films depicting the little habits of the film buffs we were, somewhat as one recounts the habits and customs of a primitive tribe. These films weep for the vanished ritual of the darkened theater, its Platonic blindness, and the innocence of the film buffs, modernity's last cavemen. Every film buff has at least one special experience, the object of his regret. Mine is neither sad nor happy, given that it never really happened. It provokes a melancholy that the Portuguese call *saudade*: nostalgia for what might have occurred. My experience was all expectation. Every time I saw a film I had the feeling I was in another one, unexpected, different, inexplicable, terrifying. As a child I had sneaked into a theater for adult films: they were showing *The Orgies of Nesle Tower*. An iceberg appeared between two nude scenes of Sylvana Pampanini, followed in turn by a Navy boat in which the President of the Republic of Chile proclaimed that Antarctica too was Chilean. At the sound of the word "Chilean," Sylvana Pampanini reappeared — and the film went on as though nothing unusual had happened.

A few years later I understood that the sudden irruption of one film in another was not enough to count as magic; and yet I seemed to grasp that every film is always the bearer of another, a secret film, and that to discover the secret the viewer would have to develop the gift of double vision that we all possess. This gift, which Dali could have dubbed "the paranoid-critical method," consists simply in seeing, not the narrative sequence actually shown in a film, but the symbolic potential of the images and sounds in isolation from their context. A secret film almost never appears at first viewing; and even if it is clear that a very bad film (but what is a very bad film?) is overloaded with clandestine films, it is also true that being very bad is still not enough for a film to be fascinating. A bad film lacks an effective system of surveillance. It doesn't check the narration and the coherence of the acting — let's say it makes it too easy to go in and out, so that a whole crowd of stowaway passengers can mill around incognito. Whereas a well-surveyed film like *Touch of Evil* whets our taste for trickery. Just imagine what would happen if you tried listening to a dialogue as a perfectly linear thing, in this film where people so often speak all at once. You'd end up with something like: "I think that... Mexican... when?... didn't eat lunch... some shit... on time... ten... after the crime... quick, quick, to the cafe across the street... with a lawyer... that it's raining... his wife... spill your guts," and so on. Or how about trying to put together a Hitchcock film from the clues of the voyeurs who are always muddling up the plot? Why not forget the fights in a Hawkes film, and concentrate on the clouds, irrepressibly figurative, billowing the face of George Washington up in the sky? What about the proliferation of clocks and Omega watches in a Greco-Latin toga flick, making it *ipso facto* an esoteric film? Then there's that improbable Spanish spoken by a Gypsy Ava Gardner in *The Barefoot Contessa*. Or the agnostic cross sketched by the androgynous Christ, Esther Williams, in *Million dollar Mairmaid*. Or the poorly draped tunic that makes Rossellini's Socrates lose his footing. All these images and signs could fit into the film I'm searching for, traveling incognito within every film. But such exercises are only a first step in the journey through the film-sea and its multiple archipelagoes.

About ten years ago in the Acropolis bar, right across the street from the former Texas bar in the city of Lisbon, a film

electrician was trying to enlighten me as to the multiple soul of the Portuguese. He told me that each Portuguese possesses a secret important for him and him alone. For example, an exact knowledge of the depth of a hole in a wall in the somber corridor of a house in ruins. All the acts of his life must be organized around this jealously guarded secret. It seems to me quite difficult to find any better explanation for the incognito journey through the multiple films in the life of any film buff or filmmaker. The superstition that we only see or only film one single film is transformed within each of us to this: from film to film we are in pursuit of a secret film, hidden because its desire is not to be seen. The subject of this chapter is nothing but the quest for this film and for the oblique manner of viewing to which it gives rise. My thesis: without such a secret film there is no cinematographic emotion.

The points I will touch on involve the theory and philosophy of cinema as "communication." I'll be making some barely theoretical suggestions for a "rhetorical defence of the art of filming and of cinema as art." The first strategic idea that warrants development might be called "the secret plan" (bearing in mind that in the Latin languages, *plan* can also mean *shot*). Beneath this designation familiar to all conspiracies, I am speaking of a technique that certain Romantic composers applied to works they called "symphonic poems." These are musical inventions which do not rely on abstract formal structures (sonata, fugue) but on a narrative plan that has nothing musical about it: a stroll, a nightmare, the story of a love affair or a country's destiny. The most successful symphonic poems make use of the accidental elements of the narrative to create purely musical values. Sometimes the imitation of a natural sound or a bird song produces a musical building block whose characteristic is to be both theme and development all at once. In the early years of this century, the extravagant Andrei Bielyi structured novels around the sonata form (dramatic symphony). He used musical symmetries as a means to convoke his narrative ideas. Plural since its very beginnings, the cinema has always loved to musicalize its montage, to tell stories with music, to make dialogue dance. None of this is new or pretends to be so. I just want to facilitate the jump toward this world of images called a film, in which several films coexist simultaneously — films I'm trying not to ignore, but to

render as visible as possible. I'm evoking a cinema that has renounced its narrative capacity, its hypnotic power of ravishment, preferring to turn back on itself and let loose a proliferating series of circular images, narrative "off-screens" that profit from the already-seen. All this in order to pluralize narrative sequences, which then reveal their capacity to give birth to an unheard-of form of cinematographic narration, its rules still awaiting invention, its poetics still awaiting discovery.

The form of visual polysemia that I want to treat first comes about when we watch a film whose apparent narrative logic sticks more or less to a storyline, and whose wanderings, cracks, and zigzag trails can be explained by a secret plan. This plan might be nothing more than an unexplicit film whose strong points are found in the weak points of the apparent one. A normal film always balances moments of intensity with others of distraction or repose. Imagine that these moments of repose tell another story, make up another film, one which plays with the apparent film, contradicting it, speculating on it, prolonging it. Now let's suppose that these two imagined films, one apparent, the other hidden, function together according to a secret structure. This structure is neither subject matter nor enigma, but rather an arbitrary although coherent plan, like the genetic code that is said to determine a person's character — or again, like the plan of a symphonic poem, minutely exacting and swarming with turnabouts, but of which nothing will ever be known, because the plan will be destroyed the moment the work is finished. Let us try to imagine a few poetic figures capable of linking the strong film to the weak one. It is now taken for granted that the narrative key resides in the secret plan. We will suppose that this secret plan is Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. A young man is stopped at the entry to a party by an old drunken sailor who recounts his life story. Let the poem serve as our narrative arc, structuring the film to be made. We'll begin by imagining several stories in which to drape the turnabouts of the poem. There must be a palpable tension between the young man's impatience and the fascination brought on by the sailor's stories, between the enormous quantities of maritime ups-and-downs and the extremely short time spent telling them. The stories we'll imagine are simply narrative responses to the back-and-forth movement of the poem. These

narrations can take the form of images or of brief tales. Suppose that at a certain moment a composite image appears, belonging to two narrative sequences which the secret plan has helped us to produce. For example: close-up of a woman's hand on fire, pan towards her ecstatic face beaded with sweat, camera movement prolonged toward the sky where we discover a cross lost in the clouds, from which emerges the face of Christ. Except that in reality the cross is a DC6 bringing the lover to New York. In short, *Joan of Arc* and *Casablanca*, simultaneously.

In this simulation, the image serves as a matrix for two potential sequences whose final coherence is guaranteed by the secret plan. Our fiction implies a certainty or a conviction: in the world there is no figure bereft of consistency, even if that figure is incoherent with its coexisting image. Once the double image is composed we can momentarily forget the secret plan and use the image as the departure point for a film yet to come — for it is most definitely the image that determines the narrative, not the reverse. It is on the basis of this image that the film will be made, and not on the basis of its preexisting narrative structure.

The application of such a method involves a transformation in the manner whereby films are realized. The screenplay cannot come before the film, and the actors cannot be conceived in isolation, since they are above all a bridge between two or more films, serving to highlight elements of the image that the hierarchy of camera position can't help but relegate to the background. For instance, the actor can gaze over at an ashtray with no apparent importance — but without this gaze we would never have noticed the ashtray, even though it is directly in front of the camera and turns out to be decisive later on.

This method presupposes the constant practice of combinatory art. A commonplace tells us that any gesture or image can be the departure point for a film — but the same commonplace refuses the idea that a film could be made up only of departure points. Or rather, that the continuing feeling of being always in the midst of beginning a film could facilitate the coexistence of several films in a single construct of images. There is combinatory art when several thematic sequences are structured in such a way that one need

merely combine them with others for them to unveil unexpected aspects of the narration.

Ideally, each film should have its own combinatory logic. For example, let's imagine a combinatory system composed of ten themes organized around the triad I have just proposed: two films and a secret plan. Each theme contains two stories organized around its own secret plan, which gives us ten themes and twenty stories. And the secret plan is articulated with the stories by way of its own combinatory system, which differs from the visible plan. It must be stressed that the manner whereby the themes combine has neither to do with geometry, nor with free association. It is just as distinct from the game invented in the seventeenth century by J. Caramuel as from the more recent play of the prophylactic club Oulipo. For the combinatory system to generate poetic emotions, the themes must not only be drawn at random, nor merely be far removed from each other; they must be obsessions. We all have treasure troves of obsessions in our head and our body: a mania, a numbers game, an invisible lover, a heroic act just waiting in the wings, a enticing crime to commit, a sport, an eternal moment. Here must be the source of the incantatory theme. A first combination will set it revolving around the secret plan, so as to give it weight, gravity. A second will cause it to produce scenes with a poetic force born of the feeling of being in several places at once, a feeling of instability and uncertainty. In this way the images can become both abstract and concrete, archetypal and everyday, plural and intensely present: images both evocative and invocatory.

In his critique of the Stanislavsky method, Michael Chekhov claims that it is preferable for an actor to build his character on emotions that spring not only from a real past, but also from a possible one: for imaginary events have more reality than those which really took place. The reason for this is that imaginary events have an appetite for existence, while real events are yearning for death. Chekhov simply forgot, or sought to forget, that events which have really occurred are also the evocation of possibilities. Because what happens to us only happens to us halfway. Thus Chekhov says that I would find it easier to enact a man taking dinner on the day of his father's death if in fact my real father is still alive; and yet the event is not more real just because it is imaginary, but

also because it cannot help but eventually be real. Sooner or later it cannot help but happen. Its non-existence doesn't diminish its reality, but adds to it.

Evocation, invocation: the two functions of the moving image can be complementary. On one hand, mechanical evocation of events that have already taken place or that will take place, that belong to other worlds even if these other worlds themselves are films, gods already dead or waiting to be born. On the other, invocation of eternal events (cf. Whitehead): perpetual recreation in a state of constant regeneration or decay. In this commerce with the beyond, the film invites us on a voyage along a subterranean river; from our boat we glimpse figures bodied forth from the other world, deformed figures that would be invisible without the darkness. Illuminated figures whose epiphany dwells in the shadows, in shadowy forms whose origin is in forms darker still; shadows bearing the seeds of all form. By voicing these two modern ideas, I seek not so much to lend prestige to our trade as to revive a debate which dates back to the early days of cinema and remains unresolved: to fabricate an image, should one begin with a backdrop plunged into darkness, or with one so brightly illuminated that all the shadows have been chased away?

Let's imagine a childhood memory. My two brothers and I are sleeping in the same room. It is still nighttime, but when I awake I can distinguish murky forms: a two-headed camel, a giant foot, and a flattened skull that inexplicably winks at me. I hear voices in the street crying: "Death to the hat!" Stretching out my hand, I touch an object, recognize it: it is a glass full of water, which I knock over and break. The accident paralyzes me, I know that if I rise the splinters of glass are likely to cut me. I know the location of the bathroom, the kitchen, the stairway down to the street, but I'm not sure I'm completely awake. I do not believe (I "misbelieve") what I see. Tatters of dreams cling to images glimpsed in the shadows, lending them uncertain life. Between two worlds, my elder sister suddenly appears. She gently opens the blinds. A pale light of winter wraps slowly round the dream-forms and clothes them with a plausible shape. I gaze at them, but it is enough to close my eyes (or just to squint) and the monsters reappear.

Another example. Not long ago, a thief entered the house. Total darkness reigned. I had hidden in a corner and was looking for a honey jar. The robber was exploring the house with a flashlight. Its beam lit up a pipe that I never recalled having seen, an undiscovered painting of my father on a bicycle, a miniature of the Venus de Milo, a radio, an inconceivable piano, a freshwater spring in the dining room. Objects which had never before crossed my eyes. But when someone cried, "Help! Thief!", the lights came on suddenly and all these objects disappeared, along with the robber. Evocation and invocation blend together in these two examples, while the departure point of the images lies in total darkness.

Yet another example. For some time now I've been having difficulty reading, and I believe the moment has come to confide in the science of ophthalmology. After the tests the doctor decides to wash my eyes, but he warns me: "Your dilated pupils will make all light sources blinding." Which was in effect the case. While casting about for an exit to the street, I cross paths in the waiting room with a famous model pursued by a pack of photographers. Flashes go off here and there, each one plunging me into total whiteness, absolute. Between each flash I struggle to rebuild the world. The scene stretches on and after the eightieth flash I begin to make out objects issuing from the white, which in between times has become more real than the world of shadows inhabited by the optician, the model, and the photographers. Suddenly I realize I am traveling from the optician's, on rue Beautreillis, to Antarctica as described by Poe in *The Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym*. The situation seems determined never to finish when I brusquely become aware that the people have fled from their world of shadows and the photographers are beaming out flashes from Antarctica, while the young model, so white, so crystalline, almost transparent, is appearing in the flashes of shadow that render her visible for a few seconds' time. Here, the departure point of the scene is an image whose origin is bedazzlement.

In each of the three examples, the departure point has always been an image-situation. A child's awakening, a spectral thief, blinding flashes. The actual fictions only come afterwards, and can only develop by drawing constantly on the images that generated

them. The image-situation is the instrument that permits the evocation or the invocation of the imaged beings. It serves as a bridge, an airport, for the multiple films that will coexist in the film that is finally seen.

Several times I have evoked the expression "double vision," without ever giving it a precise definition. I use it as I have found it in German and Breton manuals of sorcery, where it describes that which allows us to see the things of this world enveloped with things from another world, situated in another place and time. For example: seeing a friend who tells us his plans for the future, and at the same time seeing his coffin and his cadaver behind him, with his friends already gathered round crying. Or again, seeing ourselves in a mirror which reflects our image, but with a distant beach in the background rather than the furniture of the room. Antichrony. Anti-epic. The cinema was quick to incorporate this particular type of vision — dissolve and flashback — without ever attempting to make it the departure point of a dramatic sequence; rather it was used as a dramatic device which could, if necessary, be abandoned (see André Bazin's piece on "the death of the dissolve"). It seems to me, on the contrary, that these mixed images could be at the origin of a fictional field situated around the image-situation. It remains true that this double image is only possible under certain conditions: 1. It must not be interpreted as two superimposed images, one real and the other symbolic, like the *femme fatale* doubled by a serpent (unless our lady in black should collect snakes and come to perish at the end of the film, strangled by a reptile); 2. The two superimposed images must refer to a third, invisible but obvious: the lady in black and the serpent refer to wandering souls, from beast to man and vice-versa; 3. The image must avoid becoming autonomous allegory: it must remain fragmentary, incomplete.

Since its beginnings, cinema has been a way of juxtaposing fragments of real life so that they give the illusion of a continuum. Filmmakers have been divided between those who favor the art of juxtaposition and those who highlight the events that occur within each fragment. In brief, the partisans of *montage* and the partisans of *mise en scène*. And yet almost no one has judged what happens between two fragments to be worthy of attention. Those who tried

to state the problems (Russell, Dali, Buñuel, Welles) were considered jokers. And yet it is well known that every joke conceals a serious problem. The problem could be put in these terms: what happens between two shots, between two frames, between two films zapped on television? This question has given rise to a good many of the ideas I've been trying to clarify. I will give these ideas provisional names: "missing fragment," hypnotic point," "sublime ennui."

A few months ago, during a trip to Greece, I found myself standing before a statue of a horse. Lengths of metal tubing held together the seven remaining fragments of the original statue. The first surprise came when I tried to imagine the missing horse as a whole, which entailed mentally erasing the fragments of the real horse before me, one by one. Yet as I began to examine the actual pieces, one by one, a quickly recomposed horse broke free of the fragment, to jump through the window and gambol off toward the clouds. I came to the conclusion that if I wished to see the original horse I would need to sacrifice the fragments of the horse before my eyes, which I did without delay. The eternal horse returned, or rather, never ceased returning in indiscernible sequences, as though effaced or weakened, drained away. In fact, the fantasmatic horse needed the real fragments, the way airplanes need airports. So I resigned myself to looking at the fragments before my eyes, once again. And yet the ghost horse persisted in its flighty and evanescent return, until I understood that to land, an airplane needs not many airports but just one. Therefore I chose a single fragment and forgot all the rest. The miracle happened: the horse arose from a single fragment. I tried to repeat the experiment with another fragment, and then another; each time it succeeded, but in a different way, as if each fragment could only engender a different horse. I then decided on an extreme experiment. Marshalling up my full concentration, I strained to invoke simultaneously the seven horses corresponding to the seven fragments on display. Not one of them answered the call. Finally, making use of the logic of nonsense (*la razón de la sinrazón*), I concluded that one of the fragments had the power to "unhorse" all the others. It was then that I grasped the rhetorical figure which I immediately named "the missing fragment." The function of this figure as it concerns us here is to make visible the incompleteness inherent in cinema. Every film is incomplete by

nature, since it is made of fragments interrupted by the director's cry of "Cut!" When we attempt to complete these fragments, several different films will answer the call. If we consider each fragment of a film as an airport, then we can accept the idea that multiple films will land there. But there is one condition: we will always need a few empty or inert fragments hovering around the film in search of a landing strip they never will find. These are the "missing fragments."

In a hilarious essay on the James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the psychologist and cabalist Carl Jung recounts that the novel's plethora of onomatopoeias and secret passages provoked a great drowsiness in him; indeed, he fell into a deep sleep while reading. From this he concluded not that the novel was boring, but that it was hypnotic; or at least that it had a hypnotic point. A few years ago, after reading the curious essay *Dreaming*, by John Malcom, I and a mathematician friend named Emilio del Solar decided to write a book on dreams, and to do so we took to sleeping in the most disparate of places: in the street, while walking, beneath tables, during a meal, during a speech, or, of course, during a film. Once we had acquired the ability to sleep at will, we devoted ourselves to examining the mechanism of sleep and, above all, the relation between the moments of sleep and periods of real life that frame them. It became clear to us that the moments of real life functioned like a film, with segments spliced together so as to produce the illusion of continuity. The only catch was that "inside" the seemingly compact image, each segment contained something like potential segments, in the same way that a sequence-length shot creates close-up effects and imaginary changes of camera angle despite its rhetorical continuity (for all cuts are prohibited in such a shot). Clusters of "dreamed images" are superimposed on the visible ones, giving the impression that we see the real world from the perspective of dreams and oblivion, as in moments of profound drowsiness.

Before going on, I'd like to recall three types of cuts that we use in editing a film: American, French, and Russian. In the American, perfect continuity between the two segments is achieved through the editing practice of the "invisible cut." Thus when moving from one point of view to the next you catch the character exactly where you left him in the previous shot, producing films

conjugated in the present tense, free-flowing like a freeway at midnight; free-flowing and empty. The French method is perverse, or in other words, theatrical: it consists in the idea that it takes time to change viewpoints, and that the gap should have its place in the film. Thus a few frames of each pre-mounted segment of the film are ritually clipped on the editing table. Russian editing, unlike the French method, supposes that each segment is autonomous, that each segment is a different film, and that to establish the continuity as you move from one to the next you must add a couple of frames to recall what has just happened in the preceding segment.

Let's go back to the idea of dream and awakening. Imagine the moment of the film at the confluence of all the hypnotic distractions: the point where we spectators begin to fall asleep, really or metaphorically; the point where we begin to lose the thread of the story, and yet do not feel ready to leave the room for disinterest, quite to the contrary. It is at this point that we can finally say that we are in the film. But what does it mean to be in the film? Whoever goes to see a film is witness to spectacle which he knows to be infinitely repeatable, since it is graven on celluloid. But he who has fallen really (or ritually) asleep becomes part of the film to the extent that he is no longer simply watching the landing of the images and events, but is also seeing them take off: and the images fly up in every direction, now toward the film, now toward the spectator in search of his multiple private lives. An old Hollywood saying claims that a film is a success when the viewer identifies with the hero: *he* accomplishes the action, *he* must finally win. I think that in any film worth seeing you should identify with the film itself, not with one of its characters. You should identify with the objects being manipulated, with the landscapes, with all the characters, though this doubling can never take place until you have reached and gone beyond the hypnotic point. From this moment forth you are in another film. Before the hypnotic point, we are watching a spectacle, a production: the images come to us. Now it appears that the images are taking off from the airport of ourselves, and flying toward the film we are seeing. Suddenly we *are* all the characters of the film, all the objects, all the scenery. And we experience these invisible connections with just as much intensity as the visible segment. A competent professor of dramatic construction can always claim that what is happening to us

is nothing other than boredom. And it is true that insofar as we approach the cinema like an entertainment or a sport, two conditions are required for those who want to be kidnapped by the spectacle: on the one hand, the pretense that we are specialists, connoisseurs of the acting, and on the other, a constant readiness to adopt the viewpoint of the hero. In the contrary case we'll be bored. Now what kind of boredom is this? If the role of the actor is not emphasize his psychological particularities but to build bridges between different particularities of the scene, then identifying with the hero and seeing the others as rivals amounts to seeing nothing at all.

Since *Star Wars* we know that the film industry needs production models, prototypes, like any other industry; this idea has caught on throughout the world, not only in the United States. Soon the theorists of communication came forth with the magical idea of the "industry-wide narrative paradigm," that is to say, a narrative model bound to rules known by everyone. The most famous of these paradigms is "central conflict theory"; but others are now appearing.

Not long ago the paradigm of "magic realism" was invented. Its principle — its driving force — is that of the immortal story: all that you see has already happened and will happen many times again. But there is yet a third model, of European extraction: the American critics have parodied it by saying it produces stories whose characters are all condemned before the title lights up the screen. The origins of this model, however, are most ancient. It says very simply that our destiny is written in the stars, that the terrible thing is not that stories can never take place, but rather that they can only take place in time. Whereas there above, in the heavens, they are always in place. Let's give an example of each paradigm. Conspirators decide to kill the tyrant (Julius Caesar, we'll say). Various difficulties put off the supreme moment, which is finally made possible thanks to Brutus, the man beyond all suspicion. Strict application of the central conflict paradigm. In another story (call it *The Death of Julius Caesar*), we see the conspirators in the act of stabbing the Emperor, who realizes that among the assassins is his trusted Brutus. Wounded more deeply by this sight than by any dagger, he abandons himself to death. But, says Borges (the involuntary inventor of this second paradigm), destiny adores

repetition. A few centuries later, a band of gauchos in a land south of Buenos Aires stab their boss; among the assassins is the son of the victim. The attraction of stories that fall under this paradigm is the fact that they are repeatable: it is the banalizing of a device better known as the "immortal story." This device has only recently become an industry-wide paradigm even though it may be found here and there in the history of cinema (*Pandora*, *West Side Story*). In the third case, Julius Caesar is an amateur astrologer. Still young, he finds his destiny written in the stars. He knows that conspirators will kill him. He knows that their number will be fourteen, but he can only identify thirteen of them. When at last, at the moment of the murder, he discovers that the fourteenth star is Brutus, he cries: "So it was you!" Thus he can die with all the satisfaction of the detective novel reader, who discovers the identity of the killer and then closes the book to fall asleep.

But the films that spring from these industry narratives are interchangeable: the need for transparency prohibits the secret uniqueness of the film. Orson Welles used to ask, "Why work so hard, if only to fabricate others' dreams?" He was an optimist and believed that the industry could dream. Accepting his postulate would mean confusing dreams with calculated, profit-hungry mythomania. Let's be much more optimistic: even if the industry perfects itself (in its tendencies toward control), it will never be able to take over the space of uncertainty and polysemia that is essential to images — the possibility of transmitting a private world in a present time that is host to multiple pasts and futures. I speak of an open and therefore untimely present ("Untimeliness," said Alberto Savino, "consists in grasping the present and remaining slightly ahead or slightly behind"). In this private world, films will appear which the duty of mystery and the cloak of incognito will render unclassifiable, protean and ubiquitous; they will be inexhaustible, because gifted with infinite polysemia, and exceedingly tough to strike down. For like the humble planarian, an earthworm that merely rejuvenates in the face of starvation, becoming an egg and waiting to be born again, these films will know how to shrink without vanishing. With just a little luck we will all be witness to the rebirth of cinema, the same as it has always been — that is, more recalcitrant than ever before.

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"... Ten years later, in Santiago, I decided to study theater and cinema and began thinking about so-called dramatic construction. The first surprise was that all American films were subject to a system of credibility. In our textbook (John Howard Lawson: How To Write A Script), we learned that the films we loved the most were badly made. That was the starting point of an ongoing debate between me and a certain type of American cinema, theater, and literature, which is considered well made. What I particularly dislike is the underlying ideology: central conflict theory. Then, I was eighteen. Now I'm fifty-three. My astonishment is as young now as I was then. I have never understood why every plot should need a central conflict as its backbone.

I remember the first statement of the theory: 'a story begins when someone wants something and someone else doesn't want them to have it. From that point on, through various digressions, all the elements of the story are arranged around this central conflict.' What I immediately found unacceptable was this direct relation between will, which to me is something dark and oceanic, and the petty play of strategies and tactics around a goal which if not in itself banal, is certainly rendered so."

Raul Ruiz is a writer, a playwright, an installation artist, and the director of some one hundred feature-length films. Gathering together a series of lectures given recently in the United States, South America, and Italy, he presents his *Poetics of Cinema*: an appeal for an entirely new way to film, write, and conceive the image.



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